

# NOÉSIS

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**Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy**  
University of Toronto  
Issue 10 • Fall 2007

**Heidegger on Truth**  
David Smith

**Make Belief: Literature as/and/in Philosophy**  
David Owen Morgan

**Necessity and Naming: Searle, Kripke and the  
Metaphysics of Identity**  
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**The Restrictivist's Thesis**  
Peter Dobozy

**The Message is the Medium**  
Clara Venice Cameron



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N O É S I S

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**NOĒSIS:** (Greek; intelligence, thought, understanding, mind) In Greek philosophy, the knowledge that results from the operation of *noûs* (the mind, reason, intellectual faculty).

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University of Toronto  
Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy

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*Noēsis* is the undergraduate journal of philosophy at the University of Toronto, a project that aims to foster a culture of creativity and lively philosophical exchange among students at this university. The authors whose work appears in these pages are all undergraduate students and recent graduates of the U of T, as are the editors who volunteer to conduct a blind peer review of all submissions and to organize and publish the journal.

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## Editor's Introduction

Welcome to Noesis, the undergraduate philosophy journal of the University of Toronto. Our goal is to provide a forum for philosophical work and discussion within the philosophy community at U of T. From the original articles to the peer review process to editing to production, every aspect of the journal you are reading is the work of talented undergraduate students. In the spirit of further student involvement and outreach, this year we also held our first annual Noesis conference, giving authors the opportunity to present their papers to a general audience and engage in some lively philosophical debate.

You can find copies of the current issue of the journal in the U of T philosophy department office, and both past and current issues of the journal are on our web page [www.chass.utoronto.ca/pcu/noesis](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/pcu/noesis). Our web page also has submission guidelines, information about applying to be an editor, and details on upcoming conferences which we sincerely encourage you to attend, whether you be an undergraduate student, graduate student, or anyone at all with a bent for philosophy.

There are many individuals to whom Noesis is greatly indebted for their continued support. On behalf of the Noesis board of editors, we'd like to thank the officers of the philosophy department of the University of Toronto including chair Donald Ainslie, acting chair Deborah Black, Joe Heath, Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies, undergraduate counselor Alisa Rim and business officer

Suzanne Puckering. We'd also like to thank the philosophy course union for hosting our webpage and promoting the journal, and Hart House and the Great Ideas Fund for supporting our conference. Finally, we owe a great thank-you to the U of T philosophy faculty at large for encouraging promising students to submit papers for publication. We give a special thanks to Mark Kingwell for appearing as keynote speaker at the first annual Noesis conference and to our Faculty Advisor, Fred Wilson.

So now that you're familiar with what Noesis is and how it works, have a read of the most important part: what Noesis has to say, philosophically. We trust you will find the following articles engaging, thought-provoking, and even challenging, as we most certainly did.

Kathryn Mann and Katharine O'Reilly,  
Editors-in-Chief 2007.

# Make Belief: Literature as/and/in Philosophy

David Morgan

Literary texts invent the worlds they describe in a persuasively philosophical way. It's true that each statement in every one of Joyce's texts turns out to be false: they only ever refer to false characters and false events, to false Dublins and false Blooms. Yet readers are comfortable with this immediate tension even as they begin each novel by believing in it. As J. Hillis Miller has suggested, when *Moby Dick*'s narrator asks us to call him Ishmael, we agree to by reading on.<sup>1</sup> We don't pause after the novel's opening sentence to challenge the epistemic warrant of its assertion—an incredibly understated epistemological achievement. The Cartesian point, *cogito ergo sum* (to think and therefore *be*), misses the force of 'being' in literature, as it's not Ishmael's thinking that confirms his existence in the narrative. He simply *is* as Melville tells us so, a truth readers accept on *good faith*. In this way, literature *makes belief* in its readers while readers *make-believe* in its fictions. Authors and readers have relied on these precarious truths for centuries, at least as long as Quixote saw that the 'whole fabric of famous fabrications was real', so much so 'that no history in the world was truer for him'.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the peculiar status of reference in the novel: persuasive but non-argumentative; epistemologically unstable but not problematically; pretensive but not deceptive; false but not wrong.

By not obscuring or effacing the instability of its truths, literature begins to work philosophically. While some maintain that false is false as black is black and white is

<sup>1</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. John Rutherford (Toronto: Penguin, 2000), p. 27.

white, literature draws out the grey in this old philosophical paradigm. Believing in the fictive realm that each text invents should remind philosophers that truth-conferring is not the end of all philosophical pursuit. This insight echoes Jean-François Lyotard's report on knowledge in *The Postmodern Condition*, as the 'unquestioning acceptance of an instrumental conception of knowledge'<sup>3</sup> is no longer feasible. Lyotard shows that by revealing 'necessary truth' and 'certain knowledge' to be the fuzzy concepts they always were, philosophy is forced to reconsider how it shall proceed, with particular emphasis on how it presents itself. Recalling that its expression is its first assertion, philosophy's manner of expression must be made its primary interest — a (re)turn to its own literariness. I want to suggest here that through philosophy's self-reflexive literary turn, the literary text is aroused to the possibility of genuinely philosophical work. In this essay, I take this position to be appropriated and fleshed out through Martin Amis's *Night Train*. With reference to this work in light of arguments made by Lyotard, Theodor Adorno, Arthur Danto and others, I pose the question: can literature be a form of philosophy?

Arthur Danto posed the related but distinct question of whether philosophy can be thought a form of literature in his 1983 Presidential Address to the American Philosophical Association. In this speech, 'Philosophy as/and/of Literature' — to which my essay refers heavily, and already in its title — Danto's central concern is the literariness of philosophy, or more precisely, in confirming philosophy's ties to literature while asserting the exalted

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<sup>3</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 18.

value of the former over the latter.<sup>4</sup> Critical engagement with Danto's position is, in one sense, already at work in my discussion, but I will defer further comment in order to distinguish my own focus. Suffice it to say that moving from Danto's discussion of philosophy's literariness to my assertion of literature's philosophical potential invites a unique set of conceptual challenges compared to those Danto had to contend with.

My suggestion that literature might work as a form of philosophy cannot, of course, extend to all, or even all current, or even many current texts in a tidy logical proof. Novelists, playwrights and poets need not have any philosophical interest nor qualification, in what I take to be the standard academic sense — i.e. working in philosophy at a university institution, giving lectures and writing papers, exchanging ironic quips about Descartes's mind, Kantian imperatives and so on. While literary authors may (and often do) lace their works with moral complexities, or the metaphysical and ontological quandaries that have irked them in life, this does not support a claim for their status as philosophers. Even though Amis's *Night Train* features its very own professional philosopher, it's clear that Amis hasn't done anything philosophically with this mere gesture *at* the discipline.<sup>5</sup> Quasi-philosophical concern does not a

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<sup>4</sup> Arthur C. Danto, 'Philosophy as/and/of Literature', in John Rajchman and Cornel West (eds.), *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 63-83.

<sup>5</sup> *Night Train*'s philosopher happens to be the whodunit novel's first suspect, Trader Faulkner. He is a philosopher of language who specializes in conditionals: in 'the difference between 'if it was' and 'if it were'' (*Night Train*, p. 60). This difference is well known among academics for separating simple conditions from those that assert something contrary to fact. Although Trader's philosophical interests are here used to emphasize an important thematic undercurrent of the text (that is, the difficulty of distinguishing facts from fictions) my point here is much more straightforward. Trader is a professional philosopher

philosopher make, even though these concerns may be formulated intelligently by their author — even though she may hold a degree in philosophy. Albeit, holding a cushy tenure-track position in a philosophy department is likely no better mark, nor the necessary sum of qualifications to bestow the title upon an individual.

Rather than derail my investigation at this early stage in search of a limiting definition for ‘philosopher’, will proceed by relying on the openness of the concept itself. Perhaps the concept ‘philosopher’, like Adorno said of ‘philosophy’, ‘is not expoundable.’<sup>6</sup> Following Adorno and other twentieth century philosophers who have challenged the structure of this discipline — a group who have also been called pragmatists, relativists, anti-idealists, anti-Platonists, postmodernists, and post-structuralists, both in reference and slander — I will sidestep the outmoded project of identifying the ‘who’ or ‘what’ of philosophy. As will be shown, the ‘war on totality’ that uprooted such universalism in both literary and philosophical disciplines in the late-twentieth century is at least one reason to suggest the development of the pair since has aligned them in such a way as to allow their overlap.

The turn against idealism proclaimed by Lyotard, among others, did not merely signal the end of universal concepts, but stressed ‘a shift of emphasis from content to form or style.’<sup>7</sup> Moving beyond collective nostalgia for the ‘whole’ and the ‘one’ breaks free from the idealism that grounded earlier works of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, et cetera—that ran them aground, as Derrida has

but *Night Train* does not do anything philosophical by merely including this detail.

<sup>6</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2005), p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 132.

said.<sup>8</sup> Confronting the untenability of existing structures of thought requires an entirely new way of talking about them, one which subverts old forms by presenting their impossibility. It's the subversion that's powerful here. As even Danto has admitted, by turning to novel forms of presentation we open the door to new conceptions of philosophical truth.<sup>9</sup> For Lyotard this possibility could be realized by drawing out 'the unrepresentable in presentation itself,'<sup>10</sup> confronting the tensions in reference that have been around since the beginning of both philosophy and literature. One cannot proceed philosophically without facing what has been overlooked and set aside as 'unrepresentable', a concept which works for Lyotard much as the 'Other' works for Derrida. Both concepts function as placeholders for the genuinely unknown and necessarily undefined that enter one's calculations about the world, especially when looking toward the future. They both capture a faith in something that is by definition nothing in particular. It's their indeterminacy that is important.

As this opening of concepts and overcoming of structures is an inherently philosophical project, the artist who takes this project seriously and commits to working it through assumes an active role in the growth of philosophy itself. In short, the author becomes philosopher when her work engages with philosophy's own project of self-discovery. In light of this, Lyotard writes that the contemporary 'artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher':

the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> 'Philosophy as/and/of Literature', p. 66.

<sup>10</sup> *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 81.

judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps the language of ‘self-discovery’ is misleading in this context, as Lyotard’s process looks more like self-creation, recalling a useful distinction between finding and making.<sup>12</sup> Although suggesting these texts are ‘looking for’ the rules and categories by which they can be judged and understood, Lyotard is not proposing that such rules are hidden in a secret realm awaiting discovery. Each text endeavours to create its own self-critique; the rules and categories of its interpretation are made, not found.

The key to this position is that self-discovery does not work as in the familiar *Bildungsroman* narrative, where the protagonist’s newly acquired self-consciousness projects an end to the narrative trajectory. There is no ‘happily ever after’ in rigorous self-reflexivity. Though Hegel envisioned the moment of self-discovery as one of Absolute Knowledge, in a subject’s ‘perfectly knowing itself, in knowing what it is’,<sup>13</sup> he was wrong to assume this moment could last forever. His utopic ‘post-historical’ fantasy presumes stability in the subject-object collapse where knowledge becomes its own object. Even if the subject-object distinction could breakdown in the beautiful moment of perfect self-understanding he imagined, there’s no reason to believe this moment enduring, these rules and categories stable, and therefore, no end to history at all. I suggest that

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> While much of this paper builds on this apparent distinction, I rely on it only as a conceptual guide. See the introduction to Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999) titled ‘Relativism: Finding and Making’ for a discussion of the set-backs of using this dichotomy, none of which trouble me here.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, qtd. in Arthur Danto, ‘End of Art’, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 113.

Hegel leans too hard on the notion that knowledge can be *found* as ‘self-discovery’ suggests. On the contrary, beliefs must be made, continually challenged and reformed and developed by first rejecting the absolute that Hegel reached out for. Even if grasped, such skyhooks cannot even bear their own ontological weight.<sup>14</sup>

With this in mind, contemporary literature can witness its development *as* philosophy by presenting — both in its manner and matter — a development *for* philosophy. The need for self-reflexivity in literature that Lyotard advocates extends from its awareness of itself in unfamiliar terrain. Rather than efface the unfamiliar by muscling structure onto its formlessness, the postmodern author/philosopher proceeds into the undefined unknown. Not all literature or even all contemporary literature asserts this potential for the philosophical, but I hope to show by way of example that the contemporary novel has demonstrated specific features of this philosophical dimension, staking a claim to all literature’s potential to do the same.

The particular aspect of the novel that promotes its philosophical character is its ability to enrapture readers, to lure them into its realm where nothing is secure in a genuinely convincing, visceral way. J. Hillis Miller refers to this active engagement as the tacit acceptance of a contract with a text: a commitment to take its fiction seriously. The reader engages with the novel only after entering its fictive realm; she ‘must utter, in response to the work’s invocation, another performative speech act: ‘I promise to believe in you’’,<sup>15</sup> and in this promise the work finds its subject. The contract to enter the world that the novel creates dually

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<sup>14</sup> I attribute the image of a ‘skyhook’ to Daniel Dennett in *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). He uses it to emphasize the groundlessness of intelligent design.

<sup>15</sup> *On Literature*, p. 38.

mandates one's critique of that world, much as the philosopher's commitment to constantly critique the real world is her way of strengthening belief in it. The novel demands interpretation and critique in being so deliberately unstable. As Mikhail Bakhtin has suggested, the novel presents a multitude of characters, a polyphony of voices where each character is challenged and undercut by another, so that by the end no character is left unchallenged, no idea is left standing.<sup>16</sup> Pairing a believable fiction with the instability of its polyphonic presentation, the novel is always already on the verge of philosophical reflection upon itself. Moving beyond this verge, Martin Amis's *Night Train* is one such fiction realized in a self-actualized philosophical mode, a presentation that considers Lyotard's war on totality in order to move beyond it.

Martin Amis is clearly one of the artists envisioned earlier as taking philosophy's project of self-discovery seriously. Tackling the conventions of literary form by mastering and subverting them, Amis's detective novel is unceasingly critical of itself, continuously challenging philosophical and fictive modes of presentation. As his commentators confirm, 'the idea that older forms ... have been exhausted and that a merging of forms must take place for contemporary fiction to be viable, remains pivotal to him.'<sup>17</sup> What is so philosophically convincing about *Night Train* is that such secondary commentary is only ever a footnote, his text performing its own work of creation and critique simultaneously, on its own terms. From the moment it begins the reader's promise to believe in Detective Mike Hoolihan is challenged as Mike Hoolihan is quickly revealed to be a woman. This formal method of set-

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<sup>16</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R. W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1973).

<sup>17</sup> John A. Dern, *Martians, Monsters & Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000), p. 2.

up and reversal recurs throughout the text, an increasingly heavy-handed trope for the impossibility of stable positions within a self-critical philosophical project.

The detective novel is an effectively subversive mode for confronting the impossibility of stable truths, as its so typically formulaic action leads toward resolution by constantly misleading the reader away from it. The genre demands an even stronger contract between reader and text than merely believing in its fiction: the reader must also accept deception as part of its game. But Amis subverts the logic of this already subversive genre by breaking this contract, denying readers the tidy, ‘cute’<sup>18</sup> resolution they anticipate.

Like all narratives, the end confers sense retroactively on what has come before, as Slavoj Žižek has argued.<sup>19</sup> Hoolihan’s investigation into Jennifer Rockwell’s apparent suicide is, at bottom, an attempt to assert narrative order on Jennifer’s life by filling-in the sense-conferring final moments of it. Hoolihan is forced to construe Jennifer’s death as homicide because suicide does not make sense; to the detective, three self-induced gunshots to the head reverses Žižek’s schema, stripping Jennifer’s otherwise ‘perfect’ life of its meaning. There are no immediate clues to suggest her death could have been murder. Rather, it is the very lack of motive and the unanswered ‘why?’ that misleads Hoolihan — and the reader — to construct false suspects and false motives. As Hoolihan admits: ‘we all want a why for suicide.’<sup>20</sup> The stakes are considerably different when it’s murder: ‘with homicide ... we don’t care about motive. ... Motive might have been worth considering, might have been pretty reliable, might have been in okay shape half a

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<sup>18</sup> *Night Train*, p. 46, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> *Night Train*, p. 127.

century ago. But now it's all up in the fucking air.<sup>21</sup> With homicide investigations, all one needs is the 'who' to make sense of the crime: fingering the shooter is the sense-conferring endgame. But suicide needs 'why' to make sense, and where it finds no answer it denies the possibility of retroactive meaning, or of meaning anything at all.

In this confrontation with meaninglessness, Amis positions Hoolihan as the reluctant hero in the war on totality. Pursuing a motiveless suicide, Hoolihan's pursuit is that of the philosopher's, finding her way after the 'death of motive'<sup>22</sup> by piecing meaning back together from its ruins. She does, after all, find the sense in Jennifer's suicide: having committed all her faculties of reason and sympathy to refute its apparent lack of meaning, Hoolihan eventually admits of its resounding meaninglessness. Of course, in retrospect, the non-meaning that is the only answer to Hoolihan's 'why?' is the most suitable of motives. The likely solution to most problems in detective fiction is often the most subtly obvious one, and meaninglessness is the initial feature, the overlooked first suspect in Jennifer's suicide that probes further investigation. For the detective, as for Amis, Jennifer's case is less about resolving a slew of unanswered questions than it is about posing those which are unasked. Just as Chekhov's maxim prescribes, the gun had been on the wall from act one; Amis's answer was there from the beginning. He cleverly ascribes to the conventions of this genre while subverting them, using the crime novel to confront the core issue that all contemporary philosophy is obliged to face. Amis's novel chases 'meaning', but only to emphasize the chase.

The characters, action, and content of *Night Train* approach the complexity of a world turning from its utopian ideals. But it's especially for what's between Amis's words,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> *Martians, Monsters & Madonna*, p. 141.

in his style and in what he presents through the novel's form that his literary text approaches philosophy as philosophy. The novel truly sings to its reader, layering its web of recurring metaphors as a polyphony of clues. These drive the reader to confront what the novel is up to in an enrapturing aesthetic reverie. Clear blue skies, 'night trains', and April Fool's are just a few of these tropes that punctuate the novel's development, luring readers into and toward its sense-conferring finale. Defying tense and frame, Hoolihan's narration enhances this inclusive effect by occasionally addressing readers in the second person, drawing 'you' into the narrative, enrapturing 'you' in the novel's song. The doubling that Amis deploys as emphasis throughout — the 'I don't live alone. I don't live alone';<sup>23</sup> 'April Fool. April Fool'<sup>24</sup> — is the novel's heartbeat, the thump thump that assures us it is still alive after the death of motive.

The references to April Fool's are particularly relevant here, as it is the day we celebrate our willingness to suspend belief. To those cunning enough — who I think must also be sufficiently bored — it's a day for hoaxes and pranks, a chance to embarrass friends and coworkers for their gullibility. To be duped, though, is nothing but to be willing to believe, accepting what's claimed as true and simply true for being claimed. Everyone in between the schemer and the dupe is wary, forced to doubt everything they didn't already know, having remembered that the well is tainted. Whether *The Guardian*'s famous report on the republic of Sans Seriffe (1977), or Google's annual prank, media agencies around the world flood the gates of reliable truths by running curious reports on every first of April. Because they ordinarily trust these sources, savvy readers know to

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<sup>23</sup> *Night Train*, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 136.

take nothing for granted.<sup>25</sup> Expecting false stories about false cities and false peoples, not unlike those of false Dublins and false Blooms, readers are led to question their faith in these windows onto the world. If we love novels for giving us false worlds to believe in, we have to love April Fool's for forcing us to suspend belief in this one, two processes which amount to almost the same thing. But April Fool's day may be more far-reaching than any novel, as it leaves no one behind. Each of us is inextricably involved, either fooling, fooled, or nobody's-fool.

To actually make belief, texts — both literary and philosophical — must involve readers in this way. No longer just the study of 'why' or 'how', philosophy must also answer 'who' by pointing back to the reader herself. Discussing the importance of this inclusiveness to philosophical texts, Danto suggests that philosophy relies on an internal connection to its reader. The text must recall the 'I' evoked in literary works, must invoke the reader's promise to become involved in her reading, to find her own reflection in the text's implication, as philosophy's texts aim to be 'about their readers *as* readers'.<sup>26</sup> In this, philosophy retains its legitimacy in an era of deligitimation, secures its enduring relevance as 'reading those texts is supposed then to reveal us for what we are in virtue of our reading'.<sup>27</sup> Like literature, philosophy is a way of 'giving me to myself for each self peering into it',<sup>28</sup> a delivery that resonates through *Night Train*'s self-reflecting form. I take Amis to be gesturing to this — yet another heavy-handed gesture — in the mysterious and alluring repetition of the line: 'It should

<sup>25</sup> Of course, if 'taking nothing for granted' resonates with readers and extends to their reading on other days of the year, these newspaper punch lines seem to carry their own built in political justification.

<sup>26</sup> 'Philosophy as/and/of Literature', p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 79.

be said about me.<sup>29</sup> But once again, what's important is recognizing how this rigorous self-reflection differs from the self-discovery of the *Bildungsroman*.

While he promotes philosophy's connection to its reader, Danto does not subscribe to philosophy's responsibility to delegitimation. As he writes: 'to acquiesce in the concept of philosophy-as-literature just now seems tacitly to acquiesce in the view that the austere imperatives of philosophy-as-science have lost their energy.'<sup>30</sup> This is in fact the argument I have made in *support* of literature-as-philosophy throughout this entire essay. His condemnation is my commendation. Danto deplores the acquiescence he describes, continuing to insist on philosophy's commitment to universal, necessary truths. My counter-thesis takes this faith in a normatively commanding notion of necessity — what Wittgenstein has termed logical 'superhardness' — to be no longer tenable. It fades where delegitimation thrives: in reflecting the obvious instability of rigidity itself. Although Danto realized there is more to do in contemporary philosophy 'than merely stating the truth,'<sup>31</sup> he does not condone the marriage of contemporary literature to contemporary philosophy that I have argued for. For Danto, philosophy becomes literary as a 'consolation prize for failing to be true,'<sup>32</sup> a suggestion which is not only arrogant — self-righteously positioning philosophy above literature — but backward.

Danto errs in assuming literature's fictive truths diverge from something really real. As literary texts construct their false worlds without effacing the fact of their construction, as they revel in the imaginary and draw readers in to do the same, they perform their own

<sup>29</sup> *Night Train*, p. 128.

<sup>30</sup> 'Philosophy as/and/of Literature', p. 64.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

delegitimation. They enact their fictions more openly and honestly than idealist philosophers, who, like Danto, claim their fictions are ultimate truths, foundational structures and universal concepts. Literature is deliberate in failing to be true. It suggests a way of overcoming the false authority of grand narratives, and has suggested this from the very beginning. Following *Night Train*'s solution to the death of motive, becoming literary can be philosophy's solution to delegitimation as it is the most subtly obvious answer, there from the beginning and so obviously as to be overlooked. To overcome its historical fiction, its presumption of truth and positive meaning, philosophy must embrace its art and artifice. Accepting its history as one of invention is philosophy's first inclination toward the literary.

Philosophers do not find beliefs, they make them. I hope it's clear by this assertion that it's not the making that I take issue with, but the denial of this make-believe. As has been said of Nietzsche's relation to belief, '[w]hat matters is not whether or not we like an interpretation [i.e. whether we believe a claim to be true] but whether the interpretation masquerades as something that it is not.'<sup>33</sup> Moving beyond beliefs that masquerade as dogmatic truths was Nietzsche's project, but is one that is still worth pursuing today, for reasons I have shown here. My title, 'Make Belief', carries its own positive message. It says of beliefs: 'get out there and make them!' There is no formula for their creation, nor any way to project their future content, but I take these points to be virtues. Approaching the world as one who makes beliefs about it opens a window onto a future that lies in wait of nothing.

Preparing for such a necessarily unspecific future requires a confidence in the unknown that I am willing to call faith. Akin to Derrida's 'messianicity' without

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<sup>33</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 40.

messianism,<sup>34</sup> this faith is non-religious, non-spiritual, and entirely forward thinking. Faith in the unknown is quite different from idealist optimism that the future will make such unknowns known — a distinction that resembles Mark Kingwell's denunciation of 'comfort'<sup>35</sup> in opposition to 'hope'. Hope is earnestly indeterminate, forward searching, and open-ended. Comfort is nostalgic and wistful: utterly *hopeless*. To assume the unknown discoverable and retroactively sense-conferring on all that has come before extends from *bad faith*. It takes comfort in something that isn't there, won't ever be there, and can't be there. It manifests in one's assumption that her life will have one day meant something, in her false sense of comfort with the thought that it did all along. But as Jennifer Rockwell found, this comfort is unstable and ultimately unsatisfying. One looks toward the future unknown and unpresentable with hope by refusing comfort, confronting oneself critically and constantly with the faith (*good faith*) that this critique will lead to self-improvement. Like the faith that allows a reader to believe in a novel's fiction, faith in the unknown invests in a future that promises to be nothing but eye opening. As readers risk such paradigm shifts every time they begin a novel, risk challenging old beliefs and forming new ones in light of insights of the text that lies before them, philosophers should look to the faith of these readers for guidance into the vast unknown.

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<sup>34</sup> *Rogues*, p. 153.

<sup>35</sup> Kingwell deploys the term 'comfort' at least twice as a specifically philosophical idea. *Catch and Release* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2003) concludes with 'Comfort', a chapter that seeks to overcome the past by remembering its pains and losses. I take Kingwell's use of 'comfort' here to be cautionary, pointing to a past that is less comforting than we often project it to be. The other occurrence of 'comfort' is more explicitly pejorative, from a recent essay published in *The Toronto Star* (October 2, 2006) titled 'The future of democracy'. In it, he identifies comfort as the most virulent threat to progressive democracy, 'the enemy we cannot fight because we cannot see'.

# Heidegger on Truth

David Smith

There is something strangely perverse about doing philosophy. Every investigation seems to end in frustration, in aporia. Yet philosophers struggle onward, continually asking questions in hopes of arriving at truth. Any skepticism about such questioning, to be vindicated, is expected to present itself before philosophy for deposition if it is to be taken seriously. ‘Truth’, however, is always presupposed. It is rarely called into question. By taking up an investigation, it is already implicitly agreed that there is truth that propels the investigators. Martin Heidegger grew suspicious of this silent agreement between philosophers. This truth that the whole history of philosophy – and the entire history of Western thinking – has been so sure of, struck him as possibly its least understood concept.

For Heidegger, the question of what makes a true thing true was inextricably tied up with the question of Being,<sup>1</sup> the question to which he devoted his life. Philosophy, since its beginning, had mistaken Being for beings. Philosophers had failed to account for what makes beings *be*, consistently supposing Being to be some kind of non-issue. Being was thought to be a self-evident or indefinable concept and was even mistakenly characterized as the most universal concept. All of these answers to the question of what makes beings *be* were not so much answers as excuses for dismissing the question. All conceptual thinking assumes beings that must necessarily

<sup>1</sup> Because I employ translations of Heidegger’s works that capitalize ‘Being’, I maintain that convention. However, I do so reluctantly since in English capital-‘B’ Being inevitably conjures up notions of some sort of supreme being. To dispatch with this connotation I begin by attempting to explain the difference between Heidegger’s use of the word and that of the tradition he meant to call into question.

precede their own conceptualization. In pigeonholing Being as any kind of concept, no matter how high and mighty that concept may be considered, Being is not recognized for what it is. It is the very ‘is’ itself.

In the opening passages of *Being and Time*, Heidegger traces all ontological theorizing back to its roots in antiquity. This foreshadowed his career of re-interpreting and uncovering philosophical concepts so as to retrieve their original meanings which had been obscured and even dramatically transformed by the philosophical tradition. His first important endeavour in this respect was to recognize in the etymology of the Greek word ‘phainomenon’ a radically different way of thinking about beings than that evinced by long-established philosophical theories, including the phenomenological approach that he had inherited from Husserl.<sup>2</sup> The word – from which we get ‘phenomenon’ – is derived from the verb ‘phainesthai’ meaning ‘to show itself’. Thus a phenomenon is ‘that which shows itself’, or ‘the manifest’. However, ‘phainesthai’ is itself a permutation of the word ‘phaino’ which means ‘to bring into daylight’. Therefore, in the word *phenomenon* is present not only the idea of the self-showing of beings but also an understanding of the very forum that facilitates such self-showing; this forum was understood by the Greeks metaphorically as light. It is that medium that gives beings over to consciousness. Heidegger demarcates this ‘availability’ or ‘givenssness’ of beings to consciousness with the word ‘Being’ (*Sein* in German).

Though this new understanding of an old philosophical analysis was a revolutionary re-assessment of something thought transparent for centuries, it was not the innovation Heidegger sought to bring about with his questioning of Being. By amending the common thinking

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 51.

about Being – as presence-to-self and presence-independent-of-perception – with a phenomenologically cleansed understanding of presence as availability and givenness for potential human engagement, he hoped to initiate a renewed investigation of the *meaning* of Being – a search for the reason why beings are given over to consciousness at all.

The meaning of Being is not an issue for any particular being but that being for which anything can have a meaning in the first place, namely us ourselves. For Heidegger, the human being is a peculiar kind of being because Being – the very availability of beings for human engagement – is an issue for him or her. It is because of the privileged position the human being occupies in regard to Being, as the clearing in which entities make themselves present, that he labels the individual human being ‘Dasein’ (German for ‘Being-there’). The human being is the ‘there’ (*das Da*) in which beings can be. Without the conscious Dasein, beings could not make themselves present. To understand why Being is – that is, the meaning of Being – (this is awkward, as Victor rightly points out; perhaps we do better by replacing the commas with hyphens?) one must first investigate the particular way in which Dasein is said to be. A proper understanding of this entity, which has the very asking of the question of the meaning of Being as a mode of its own being, is also the first step toward understanding Heidegger’s theory of truth, since he considers the process of truth – what we typically refer to as ‘knowledge’ – to be Dasein’s proper reception of that which is given over by Being.

## Questioning About Questioning

Any attempt to understand Heidegger’s philosophical investigations benefits by beginning at the Introduction to *Being and Time* and his theory of truth is no exception. There, one can observe his theory of truth at its genesis,

taking shape within the dawn of his philosophical project. In attempting to access his theory of truth in this way, one is better able to understand it as he did – as a step on the path of the Western philosophical tradition. Heidegger sees that tradition as predominantly concerned with questioning. Philosophers ask questions and attempt to produce answers to them. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how such inquiry functions and thus he begins his major work with an analysis of questioning.

‘Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought.’<sup>3</sup> As such, every question must, in some vague and preliminary way, already be acquainted with its own answer. It cannot *know* its answer – if it did there could be no search. However, because all questioning is rooted in this pre-conception of what is sought, there can be different levels of precision to inquiry, since a seeker can commit himself to the pre-conceived with varying levels of intensity. When the seeking becomes professionally rigorous, as in philosophical analysis, it becomes an investigation. But investigation is never entirely new or unfounded. It takes as its foundation the seeker’s questioning stance toward what she knew in a merely provisional way. (Heidegger calls this predilection ‘comportment’; Dasein is *always* comporting toward entities, regardless of whether it does so in a self-consciously investigative manner.)<sup>4</sup>

The anonymous thing, whatever it is, that sparks the questioning is ‘that which is asked about’. When the ‘asking about’ becomes directed in an investigation, the questioner proceeds to narrow the search to specific entities: they are ‘that which is interrogated’. The recompense to interrogation is ‘that which is to be found out by the asking’;

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 32-3 (*cf.* Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrel Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 121).

this brings the seeker's understanding closer to what was 'asked about'. It is an answer to the questioning but not necessarily a solution – it does not mean the seeking is over. The seeking *may* be over if what is found out by the asking does in fact clarify what was originally asked 'about'.

## Tradition, Questioning and Truth

Heidegger's analysis of how questions are formulated suggests that the tradition of philosophical questioning is slightly naïve in its self-understanding. Philosophical questioning is not targeted at something entirely mysterious or unknown, as is often assumed by non-philosophers. But neither is the taking up of questions entirely self-initiated, as many philosophers would like to believe. Investigation is the radicalization of comportment, the natural propensity to interrogate entities that are presented to consciousness. He blames the ascendancy of 'tradition' for prejudicial theories that fail to grasp these observations:

When tradition... becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it 'transmits' is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand.<sup>5</sup>

The common understanding of 'truth' is, Heidegger argues, one of these mistaken and supposedly 'self-evident'

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<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 43.

concepts that cloak the ‘primordial sources’ of truth. Heidegger begins *On the Essence of Truth* by examining the prejudices in the philosophical tradition that cover-up those sources.

The central prejudice concerning truth has been ‘accordance’, or, in more accessible language, ‘agreement’. Truth, in all its formulations, has been thought of as the correspondence of two things (words and states of affairs, essences and appearances, etc.). In *On the Essence of Truth* he cites Thomas Aquinas’s assertion that ‘truth is the adequation of intellect to thing.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, he mentions Aristotle’s belief that ‘the false and the true are not in things (themselves)... but in the intellect.<sup>7</sup> And, to show that the correspondence theory was not purged with the emergence of modern thought, he also refers to Descartes who argued, ‘Truth or falsehood in the proper sense can be nowhere else but in the intellect alone.<sup>8</sup> Those theories are without grounding because they assert true propositions without identifying what it is that makes them true. Heidegger objects that such theories cannot explain what the ‘accordant’ is – what makes the intellect and reality agree. Heidegger thinks that a phenomenological analysis of truth as accordance will dispel this prejudice.

Something is said to be true when it appears as it is. A statement is true if it subordinates itself to the entity it is presenting as the entity is presented to Dasein. Dasein can only engage the entity by allowing it to appear as it is – to

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrel Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 118 (cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, 16).

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1998), 178 (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* E, iv, 1027b ff.).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 178 (cf. Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, 396).

'let the thing stand opposed as object'<sup>9</sup>. The object must show itself to Dasein in an open region. If the region occupied by Dasein and the object is obstructed (for example, by a prejudice) the object remains concealed from Dasein.

## The Essence of Truth

Traditionally, it has been thought that the mind does the elucidating and that truth resides in the statement. However, for Heidegger, the mind only re-presents truth propositionally: 'Thus the traditional assignment of truth exclusively to statements as the sole essential locus of truth falls away.'<sup>10</sup> This re-presenting is the beginning of the transformation of comportment into investigation. Comportment is structural to Dasein: by being in the world, Dasein is already comporting toward entities, and statements are expressions of developments in that comportment. Truth makes its appearance when comportment agrees with the disclosure of entities that make themselves present in the open region.

Correct comportment obeys the directive of disclosure that is the initiative of the entity. By deciphering how it is that the two agree, the essence of truth will be revealed. After establishing that 'essence is understood as the ground of the inner possibility of what is initially and generally admitted as known' Heidegger is able to say, 'The essence of truth is freedom.'<sup>11</sup> When Dasein is free for exposure to entities and entities are free to be what and how they are, then agreement is possible. 'Freedom now reveals itself as letting beings be.'<sup>12</sup> Here, in contradiction to common sense, freedom is not passive but active.

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrel Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 121.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 125.

Moreover, freedom is the condition of entities unconstrained by human insistence; it is not the condition of unconstrained human beings. Freedom is the property of beings as a whole, not historical man. Heidegger calls this form of engagement ‘withdrawal’. It is easily mistaken for pure passivity, but that is not the way Heidegger intends it to be understood. To withdraw from an entity in order to let it be is to facilitate its showing itself without subverting its manner of disclosure:

What seems easier than to let a being be just the being that it is? Or does this turn out to be the most difficult of tasks, particularly if such an intention – to let a being be as it is – represents the opposite of the indifference that simply turns its back upon the being itself in favour of an unexamined concept of being? We ought to turn toward the being, think about it in regard to its being, but by means of this thinking at the same time let it rest upon itself in its very own being.<sup>13</sup>

Withdrawal is not merely an option for Dasein; it is the very mode of Dasein’s being in the world. ‘[Dasein’s particular mode of existence], rooted in truth as freedom, is exposure to the disclosedness of beings as such.’<sup>14</sup> The beings Dasein engages exist within a horizon of beings as a whole. In choosing to pay attention to particular beings, Dasein is unavoidably disregarding other beings and beings in their totality. An appropriate analogy is a photograph: a self-showing entity is the foreground that is brought into focus, and the out-of-focus background is the veiled horizon within which the foreground is able to particularize

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, Martin, trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Martin Heidegger: Poetry Language Thought*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 31.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 126.

itself. By directing consciousness towards and thematizing individual entities, Dasein must, undoubtedly, possess an unthematic understanding of everything else within reach of its potential engagement; singular entities cannot be bracketed off just as a foreground cannot be brought into focus without a background. This background is left out of the agreement between comportment and disclosure – it remains concealed.

## The Process of Truth

It has been established that truth is the self-showing of entities in the open region – it is unconcealment. Therefore, this horizon of the open region that merely provides context – Dasein is peripherally aware of it but it is not overtly manifested – must be untruth: it is that which remains concealed, stays hidden from Dasein. However, this untruth exists structurally to the phenomenon of truth and therefore belongs together with it. But how can one be aware of such a concealment? How can we *know* something which is marked by our very failure to encounter it? To answer this riddle, Heidegger thinks we need to examine more closely this word ‘truth’. It is a translation of the Greek ‘aletheia’, which is more accurately termed ‘unhiddenness’ or ‘unconcealedness’.

Once again, the etymology is pertinent to the history of the concept at issue. ‘Aletheia’ begins with the privative ‘a-’, meaning that what is followed by the prefix is cancelled out or undone (as in the English ‘un-’ or ‘non-’). ‘Lethe’ was a mythological river in Hades that the souls of those who died had to drink from. By drinking from the water of Lethe, the dead would forget all they had done and suffered during the life they had just lost and would then enter oblivion, with the reality of their own history effectively hidden from them. Some ancient Greeks believed the souls had to drink the water not upon death but before being reincarnated, so that they would have concealed from them

all the knowledge they had accumulated in past lives and would be forced to recollect that knowledge once imprisoned in another body.

By employing the word ‘aletheia’ to name that characteristic of statements in virtue of which statements accord or agree with beings or states of affairs, the Greeks were implicitly adopting an epistemology they considered palpable enough to be captured in a single word. Knowledge is the condition brought about when forgottenness or concealment of the real is undone. Translating ‘aletheia’ as ‘truth’ was just one step in the Western tradition’s repression of the primordial phenomenon of truth: ‘To translate this word as ‘truth’, and, above all, to define this expression conceptually in theoretical ways, is to cover up the meaning of what the Greeks made ‘self-evidently’ basic for the terminological use of aletheia as a pre-philosophical way of understanding it.’<sup>15</sup>

If truth is made possible by the attunement of Dasein to beings as a whole, and the particular form of comporting toward an entity in agreement with the disclosive tendency of that entity, the exclusion of entities and the de-focusing of beings as a whole should somehow be outside the sphere of truth. If Dasein is only capable of engaging episodic manifestations of individual entities while leaving all others concealed, then Dasein does not appear to be living entirely within the realm of truth at all times. However, concealment is foundational to disclosure, so untruth is co-requisite to truth – it is not the result of a discrepancy in the comportment of Dasein toward entities. Dasein can only encounter particular beings at the expense of beings as a

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<sup>15</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 262.

whole. ‘Letting-be is intrinsically at the same time a concealing’.<sup>16</sup>

The essence of truth was shown to be freedom; more precisely, it is letting beings be so that they can disclose themselves to Dasein as appearances that are in accord with what and how they are. But upon analysis, this essence proves to also be the very non-essence of truth; not only is the resulting concealment absolutely required for true manifestations but it must precede them. The non-essence of truth has priority over the essence of truth itself; disclosure can only take place in the midst of concealment.

The concealment of beings as a whole, untruth proper, is older than every openedness of this or that being. It is also older than letting-be itself, which in disclosing holds concealed and comports itself toward concealing.<sup>17</sup>

Common sense considers untruth to be a defect of disclosure or some sort of precariousness of elucidation. In fact, untruth reveals itself to be the modality of concealment, and that modality is not simply the not-yet-elucidated. It is the primordial state of entities that, unlike the prejudicial conception of untruth held by common sense, is not negative. Heidegger calls it ‘the mystery’.<sup>18</sup>

## Flight from Mystery

True statements, as the propositional re-presentation (making present again in communication) of freely disclosed entities, always take place within the horizon of mystery, of the non-essence of truth. Dasein exists within this polarity of mystery and disclosure. The essence of truth is the very

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrel Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 130.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 130.

non-essence of truth, given that Dasein can only experience the truth of disclosure within this primordial horizon of mysterious un-disclosedness. To persist in the act of comportment in the face of this pervasive untruth is an existential decision that Heidegger calls a ‘resolutely open bearing’<sup>19</sup>. When Dasein is not resolutely open it loses itself in its relations with other entities: it becomes unattuned to beings as a whole. Most of Dasein’s existence is this type of inauthentic living that fails to be true to the essence of the being of Dasein. The flight from its resolutely open bearing, being lead astray, denying the horizon of mystery and focussing on specific beings at the expense of beings as a whole – *that* is negative untruth; in Heideggarian terminology it is ‘errancy’.<sup>20</sup>

Errancy is not like concealment; it is *counter*-essence not *non*-essence. The non-essence of truth is the very ground of truth, but errancy is the denial of this ground, of the mystery that allows entities to be disclosed truthfully. When Dasein slips into errancy, it wants to hear nothing of mystery; it becomes hostile to anything that is not easily elucidated. The preoccupation of common sense with the obviousness and practicality of its claims and considerations is a symptom of this errancy. It refuses to engage mystery simply because to do so strikes it as futile, as attempting to know the realm of what cannot be known. It fails to recognize the mystery as what makes knowing possible. Readily available entities are practical and entertaining, so there is apparently no need to explore anything else. Heidegger calls such an attitude ‘forgottenness’ because it is a denial of the very heart of Dasein’s existential situation. Not only has Dasein forgotten the mystery but it has forgotten that it forgot.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 133.

However, as with concealment, there is more to the story of errancy than is immediately apparent. Dasein is always comporting toward entities at the expense of beings as a whole – that is inherent to its very constitution. It cannot access beings as a whole in a focussed, thematic way. Dasein can only comport itself *within* a horizon of mystery; when it moves the horizon moves with it. The concealed cannot be disclosed in totality. Errancy arises because Dasein is structured to err. Truthful disclosure of entities can only agree with a resolutely open comportment that walks the fine line between an incomprehensible abyss and a comfortable distraction. ‘Man is especially subjected to the rule of mystery and the oppression of errancy. He is in the *needful condition of being constrained by the one and the other [sic]*.’<sup>21</sup> As such, he can only expose himself to the disclosive manifestations of beings by engaging with errancy in the horizon of mystery.

Heidegger sees errancy as part of the inner constitution of Dasein and thus essential to Dasein’s being. The question of the essence of truth gets asked in a way that is appropriate to the primordial essence of truth only after Dasein has experienced the rule of mystery in errancy. Only when Dasein has exposed itself to individual manifestations of entities does the concealed horizon of beings as a whole become present for Dasein. ‘The glimpse into mystery out of errancy is a question – in the sense of that unique question of what being as such is as a whole. This questioning thinks the Being of beings, a question that is essentially misleading and thus in its manifold meaning is still not mastered.’<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion: A Traditional Whodunnit?

We have seen that the question of the essence of truth – what makes a true thing true – is, for Heidegger,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pg. 135.

necessarily bound up with the question of the meaning of Being. Also, we learned in what way both questions relied on a clarification of the very act of questioning. With a more proper understanding of how questions are formulated, it is possible to see that questioning is threatened by traditional answers. Tradition entrenches answers so thoroughly that the questions that gave rise to them are no longer considered questions and are in fact concealed. One such answer is the prejudicial interpretation of truth as the agreement between the intellect and reality. Heidegger dispatched with that distortion of the essence of truth by establishing the free self-showing, or disclosure, of entities as what makes it possible for mind and world to agree. This interpretation is in line with the Greek understanding of the process of truth as a wresting away from hiddenness, a process the ancients captured in a single word, ‘*aletheia*’. Finally, it was argued that this more accurate interpretation of the essence of truth gave rise to two kinds of untruth, both of which are structural to the phenomenon of truth, namely mystery and errancy.

After coming to understand Heidegger’s theory of truth, one may be left wondering how it came about that the primordial phenomenon of truth was covered over by a less than accurate correspondence theory. It is very strange that the essence of truth, understood so clearly by the Greeks that it did not even receive theoretical treatment, became obscured by subsequent tradition. How could something so fundamental be so effectively suppressed? Heidegger attributes the masking of the essence of truth to Plato. It was Plato who originally turned thinking away from truth as unhiddenness and toward correctness as the essential ground of truth by claiming the form of the good to be responsible for the agreement of knowing and known. In the essay *Plato’s Doctrine of Truth*, Heidegger tells us one need look no further than the allegory of the cave to see this turning in action. The ““allegory” contains Plato’s

“doctrine” of truth, for the “allegory” is grounded in the unspoken event whereby [form]<sup>23</sup> gains dominance over [unhiddenness]<sup>24</sup>.

By establishing the form of the good as the shining that brings visibility to all entities and thus makes them intelligible to the human intellect, Plato had placed truth under the yoke of an agreement between thinking and form. When Plato says of the [form] that she is the mistress that allows unhiddenness, he points to something unsaid, namely, that henceforth the essence of truth does not as the essence of unhiddenness, unfold from its proper and essential fullness but rather shifts to the essence of [form]. The essence of truth gives up its fundamental trait of unhiddenness.<sup>25</sup> This change in thinking regarding truth subverts the primordial phenomenon of truth as a fundamental trait of beings themselves and so instigates the metaphysical thinking that postulates a reality beyond the reality of beings and their Being, their givenness or presence. It is because all thinking since Plato’s turn is subject to this subversion that Heidegger considers the philosophical tradition to be on a path that leads only to a dead end.

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<sup>23</sup> Here, the Greek is translated as ‘idea’ which is certainly closer to the original, however, because in English the word ‘form’ is the standard translation of ‘ἰδέα’ when discussing Plato’s theory I maintain that convention so as not to confuse the reader.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 176.

# Necessity and Naming: Searle, Kripke and the Metaphysics of Identity

Alastair Cheng

Gottlob Frege's theory of mediated reference provided an influential account of how proper names work. In short, he argued that each one has both a 'sense' and 'reference', the former specifying a specific 'mode of presentation' through which we know the latter. This theory allows different names to share a referent, while elegantly accounting for how statements like 'The morning star is the evening star' can be informative – a puzzle, traditionally called 'Frege's Puzzle', which he contends theories of direct reference cannot solve, since they hold that proper names simply designate their referent.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, mediated reference provoked objections even from sympathetic thinkers, the common charge being that it makes the contingent description, taken as the name's sense, seem like an analytic fact about the referent. Assuming that the sense of 'morning star' is 'the brightest celestial body visible before dawn', for example, Frege's theory seems to dictate that an entity must meet this description in order to be referred to by that name. But this conclusion clashes uncomfortably with a strong everyday intuition that 'morning star' should continue to refer to the same entity even if it were suddenly surrounded by brighter celestial bodies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gottlob Frege, 'On Sense and Reference', trans. Max Black, in Peter Ludlow (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 563-583.

<sup>2</sup> John Searle, 'Proper Names and Intentionality', in A.P. Martinich (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 308–323, 313-4.

In the following essay, I consider John Searle's attempt to address this problem, evaluating his solution in light of several widely accepted objections by Saul Kripke. Searle's 'cluster' theory works to retain the idea that proper names refer partly by way of associated descriptions without succumbing to the pitfall outlined above. For Kripke, however, such efforts remained unconvincing: in *Naming and Necessity*, he sets out a number of metaphysical criticisms that even Searle admits many philosophers find 'decisive against any version of descriptivism'.<sup>3</sup>

I find Kripke's criticisms unconvincing, and maintain in this paper that cluster theory can comfortably survive at least *Naming and Necessity*'s metaphysical critique. Admittedly, this is not immediately obvious from Searle's own arguments, even when he responds explicitly in *Intentionality* to Kripke's objections. There, Searle attempts to directly counter Kripke's claim that cluster theory cannot account for reference across possible worlds; this approach seems inadequate to Searle's ends, however, and is interesting mostly for the questions it indirectly raises about Kripke's concept of rigid designation. If instead we analyze the basic terms of Kripke's critique, I will argue, an important ambiguity becomes apparent in the way that both authors discuss 'necessity'. Ultimately, drawing out this ambiguity not only undermines Kripke's modal arguments but also clarifies how cluster theory can account for transworld reference, a key concern for anyone attempting to revive its plausibility as a theory of proper names.

Instead of treating proper names as simple shorthand for one or more definite descriptions, Searle's cluster theory attempts to solve Frege's puzzle by holding that such names enable public discussion of things by serving as 'pegs' on which we can hang descriptions. Simultaneously, Searle claims that proper names fulfill this function by way of their

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

descriptive content.<sup>4</sup> Each name is associated with certain ‘conventional facts [and] descriptive statements.’<sup>5</sup> When we use a name referentially, however, it is not equivalent to directly describing the referent in these terms: we neither assert that any particular description within this cluster is true of the object nor that the conventional cluster exhausts all possible ways of describing it. The descriptions serve only to fix the referent, which must satisfy some weighted majority of the descriptions in order for the name to apply.<sup>6</sup>

Searle claims that this cluster theory of naming is an improvement on Frege’s sense/reference analysis, since it avoids making specific descriptions analytically true of the referent; instead, a proper name’s referent must simply satisfy some to-date-indeterminate selection of descriptions from within the associated cluster. Exact identity conditions therefore remain an open question, to be resolved – if at all – through use of the name.<sup>7</sup>

Kripke, however, rejects any descriptive explanation of naming as fundamentally inadequate. Since Kripke’s reasons are extensive, I focus in this essay on his metaphysical objections to Searle’s account – that is, those objections concerning the way in which proper names connect with their referents. These seem to consist of two distinct but related critiques of cluster theory, one accusing Searle of a self-contradictory essentialism and the other holding him incapable of satisfactorily identifying people in different possible worlds.

Central to Kripke’s criticisms is his claim that Searle’s account ultimately makes some set of descriptions analytically true of a name’s referent, which is exactly the unacceptable outcome that cluster theory was supposed to

<sup>4</sup> John Searle, ‘Proper Names’, in Peter Ludlow (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 585-592, 591.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 591.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 590-1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

avoid. Kripke builds this case from Searle's claim that 'it is a necessary fact that Aristotle has the logical sum, inclusive disjunction, of properties commonly attributed to him.'<sup>8</sup> He argues that, although Searle might want to leave vague exactly what the descriptive criterion (or criteria) for a referent's identity might ultimately be, his position entails that at least one description from within a name's associated cluster will assume this role.

Agreeing with Searle's criticism of Frege, Kripke claims that including some description in an object's identity criteria like this makes that description analytically true of the object; furthermore, he seems to hold that the only way for something to be analytically true of a real thing is if the thing itself is somehow *essentially* that way – i.e. necessarily meets that description. Although he agrees that entities might possess such essential characteristics, Kripke concludes that cluster theory's dependence on this being the case is far from sufficient proof that it is so. And either way, attributing such qualities to objects seems to contradict Searle's own distaste for treating contingencies as necessary facts.<sup>9</sup>

Kripke then attempts to draw out this inadequacy in cluster theory by testing its applicability to counterfactual situations, expressed in terms of possible worlds. His basic contention is that we use proper names to pick out a single entity, even across different hypothetical worlds: the name 'Hitler' successfully refers to Hitler in every world where he exists, a feature that Kripke claims marks proper names out as 'rigid designators'. In this sense, he argues that they are like the term 'one meter', which picks out the same length in every possible world.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Saul Kripke, 'Lecture II of *Naming and Necessity*', Peter Ludlow, ed. *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 609 – 634, 611.

<sup>9</sup> Kripke, p. 611-12.

<sup>10</sup> Kripke, p. 612.

According to Kripke, no description-based theory (including Searle's cluster variant) is capable of accounting for this everyday function of proper names as rigid designators. To illustrate, he returns to Searle's claim about the existence of necessary identity conditions for the name 'Aristotle'. Even the most prominent conventional description of Aristotle, Kripke emphasizes, will only ever be contingently true. Although Aristotle might be most famous to us for thinking impressive thoughts or teaching Alexander, for example, we can easily imagine a world where he took up wrestling instead of philosophy – and would nonetheless want to say that this was Aristotle. Kripke's basic modal argument is therefore that cluster theory's reliance on conventional descriptions to secure reference renders it incapable of accounting for our use of proper names to pick entities out of alternative possible worlds where they possess none of the attributes conventionally ascribed to them.

In *Intentionality*, Searle attempts to rebut a wide range of Kripke's objections to cluster theory, and concentrates on directly addressing Kripke's modal critique. Searle believes that it is essentially unproblematic: in response, he proposes two ways in which definite descriptions could provide a basis for rigid designation. Searle claims that even given Kripke's characterization of proper names as rigid designators, this capacity allows cluster theory to accommodate their transworld use.<sup>11</sup> As I argue below, if considered solely in terms of securing rigid designation for descriptions, Searle's arguments are successful; nevertheless, they fall markedly short of demonstrating that cluster theory can comfortably account for our use of proper names across possible worlds.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Proper Names and Intentionality', p. 321 – both the arguments discussed below appear on the same page.

First, Searle points out that any definite description specifically presented as the necessary and sufficient criterion for picking out a name's referent will designate rigidly: if teaching Alexander is taken as both necessary and sufficient for being called 'Aristotle', then the criterion will pick Aristotle out of any world in which someone satisfies that description.

This would certainly give us 'Aristotle' as a rigid designator, but it is also obviously not the sort of rigid designation we have in mind for proper names. The name would refer in every possible world to Alexander's rhetoric instructor, although it would often fail to pick out the Stageiran author of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, whom people in that world call 'Aristotle'.

Searle presumably recognizes this problem, since he claims that his second argument provides the more important response to Kripke's modal critique. He proceeds to point out that we could simply decide to use some definite description as a rigid designator for the person it picks out in our world, whether or not the description applies in others. This would mean using 'the rhetoric teacher of Alexander' to designate Aristotle even in worlds where he wasn't, for example.

Although Searle's second argument frees cluster theory from the sort of inflexibility that Kripke attacks, this seems like a distinctly pyrrhic victory. While Searle talks about simply deciding 'by fiat' that a given description will rigidly designate some particular person, he does not explain how this kind of reference is supposed to work: if it is by way of other descriptive content (i.e. the fact that 'the teacher of Alexander' wrote the *Nichomachean Ethics*), then the name will inevitably pick out the wrong person in some possible worlds, as described above. But if it does not refer by way of descriptive content, then Searle's rebuttal rests on an unexplained linguistic-conceptual mechanism, a recourse

that he explicitly criticizes in other philosophers' work on proper names.<sup>12</sup>

Should we nevertheless accept this occult mechanism as plausible, Searle might in fact be much worse off. If a proper name can successfully refer to someone in an alternate world without any kind of match between his or her characteristics and the cluster of descriptions a speaker associates with that name, why should such descriptions ever be necessary for successful reference? In this sense, acceptance of Searle's second argument regarding rigid designation risks thoroughly undermining the cluster theory he intends it to support.

While Searle's rebuttals therefore fall far short of their stated aim, I will argue that they nevertheless highlight a basic weakness in Kripke's modal critique. Kripke holds that the use of a name across possible worlds is equivalent to rigid designation; depending on what he means by this term, however, it is hardly clear that we should always take proper names as designating rigidly.

The most obvious way for a name to secure transworld reference is if it is somehow associated with necessary and sufficient identity conditions for being the entity it names. These could then provide clear grounds for determining what does and does not qualify as such in any possible world. But as discussed above, this kind of rigid designation alone is insufficient to account for our everyday sense of what proper names should do. Almost inevitably, it will exclude some of an entity's possible-world counterparts to which we still want the name to refer – Aristotle the Olympic wrestler, for example.

Since this account turns on a name's descriptive content, Kripke could very reasonably argue that it is somehow not the kind of rigidity he means, but the onus is then on him to provide a plausible alternative explanation

<sup>12</sup> 'Proper Names', p. 587.

for how such rigid designation could work. And while Kripke's assertion that proper names somehow directly pick out a single reference across all possible worlds is clear enough, the necessary mechanics are not.<sup>13</sup> In fact, it seems telling that his paradigmatic example of rigid designation (the standard meter) apparently relies on exactly the sort of descriptions just discussed to secure trans-world reference. We can provide necessary and sufficient identity conditions for the standard meter in terms of a single definite description: a certain length, where that length is defined in some other unit of measure – or, ultimately, by way of a concrete example. For most people, I imagine that this sort of fixed description is exactly how they would go about recognizing a meter when they saw one, whether in this world or any other. How could we pick out a meter without these fixed identity conditions, and what would it even mean to assert that such a thing existed?

These sorts of questions suggest a suppressed tension in Kripke's claim that proper names are rigid designators: the most intuitively credible explanation for rigid

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<sup>13</sup> This assertion might seem unfair, since Kripke follows up his critique of cluster theory by sketching out an alternative account, in which proper names secure reference primarily through their place in a chain of speakers and utterances, originating with the referent's appellation. (Kripke, p. 622-26, esp. 625-26.) But while a full evaluation of Kripke's sketch is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, Searle seems correct in asserting that he does not offer an actual alternative to descriptive theories of proper names: his account says nothing about how individuals can learn a name, for example, or repeat it intelligibly to others (see 'Proper Names', p. 507). . In this sense, Kripke's account indeed seems more like a third-person, external *description* of a name's passage through the world than an *explanation* of the internal processes determining this passage. And yet insofar as Kripke holds that a speaker's intentions must also play some role in determining a proper name's referent, he simultaneously seems to acknowledge the necessity for such explanations – which is presumably what leads Searle to accuse him of crypto-descriptivism. ('Proper Names and Intentionality', p. 314-16.)

designation, it seems, involves exactly the sort of descriptions that Kripke denies play any role in securing reference for proper names. This observation admittedly comes close to begging the question, and I certainly don't mean to suggest that disagreeing with Kripke requires presupposing some descriptive theory of names. If proper names are not rigid designators in the same sense as 'one meter', it might also seem puzzling how they could successfully refer to entities in other possible worlds, an issue I address later in the paper. For now, I simply want to emphasize that there is potentially a very significant distinction between names like 'one meter' and proper names like 'Aristotle' – one that Kripke casually glosses over.

At the very least, this seems to warrant a careful return to his basic characterization of cluster theory, with an eye to similar blurring. And doing so, I will argue, highlights a central confusion that Searle introduces into the discussion and Kripke conveniently adopts, with serious implications: an ambiguity between metaphysical and linguistic uses of the term 'necessity'.

A single line in 'Proper Names' is central to Kripke's modal critique of cluster theory: Searle's claim that Aristotle 'necessarily' possesses certain properties conventionally attributed to him. Based on his criticisms, Kripke clearly takes 'necessity' here to mean something very particular. For him, ascribing 'necessary' qualities to a name's referent implies that it possesses a sort of 'fate' above and beyond the property itself, a fate that ensures this property will come to be regardless of contingent circumstances.<sup>14</sup> On Kripke's reading, Searle's statement about Aristotle necessarily being Alexander's teacher is therefore metaphysical, a claim that things could not possibly have been any other way for him. To Kripke, this reflects the fact

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<sup>14</sup> Kripke, p. 613.

that accepting cluster theory will ultimately require making claims about the ‘essence’ of entities named. As described above, he argues that this feature makes Searle’s theory untenable, since such essences are basically inscrutable to us – if they exist at all.<sup>15</sup>

But Searle begins ‘Proper Names’ by talking about necessity in a much more limited sense. His introductory consideration of Frege’s puzzle refers to a sort of ‘linguistic necessity’, one defined by the ultimately contingent rules – the ‘institution’ – of a given language.<sup>16</sup> More specifically, he sets out to determine ‘the necessary and sufficient conditions for applying a particular name to a particular object’.<sup>17</sup> This suggests a sort of necessity quite different from metaphysical claims about essence, related instead to the requirements for successful communication according to language’s conventional rules.<sup>18</sup>

In considering Kripke and Searle’s positions, we can therefore make out two distinct but potentially overlapping ways of talking about naming and necessity. On the one hand, Kripke focuses on the necessary qualities of things themselves; on the other, Searle seems to emphasize the ways we necessarily talk about things. More specifically, Kripke focuses on metaphysical identity conditions, while Searle is concerned with the linguistic criteria for applying names to entities.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> ‘Proper Names’, p. 585-6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 588-9.

<sup>18</sup> It’s *pragmatically* necessary, in other words, that anyone I refer to as ‘Aristotle’ possess the weighted majority of features my interlocutors in a given context will associate with that name – at least if I actually want to make myself understood. And we can observe such linguistic conventions even while reserving judgement on the metaphysical necessity or contingency of those phenomena under discussion.

Both Kripke and Searle seem to tacitly acknowledge the two different forms of necessity outlined above;<sup>19</sup> nevertheless, neither thinker makes this distinction explicit, which leaves cluster theory looking unduly shaky. When critiquing Searle, for example, Kripke simply assumes that he discusses ‘necessity’ in the metaphysical (rather than linguistic) sense – a questionable interpretation that makes cluster theory seem indefensible. And since Searle fails to address this fundamental ambiguity when rebutting Kripke’s critique, his strictly modal counter-arguments are ultimately unsatisfactory.

Before considering whether cluster theory can actually cope with the tricky question of transworld identification, we must therefore return to how Searle might elaborate the basic concept of linguistic necessity sketched out above. Searle’s notion of necessity seems to depend largely on the function he believes that names serve, i.e. ‘necessity’ construed in relation to pragmatic linguistic rules. To begin with, Searle clearly presents names as a means of publicly referring to some particular object or person in our world by way of their intersubjective qualities. Once the thing itself is no longer present, precluding the easy use of indexicals, proper names provide a basis for further discussion – whether we refer to the thing for purely instrumental ends, like asking the bartender to send your

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<sup>19</sup> While Kripke argues that ‘one meter’ always designates a specific length, for example, he never suggests that anything identifiable as a meter long must necessarily have been so. Similarly, Searle holds that accepting cluster theory does not require any commitment on questions of essential identity: his view allows a kind of ‘looseness’ on these issues, he argues, meaning that speakers can use proper names to refer without making any presuppositions about issues like the contingency of objects’ spatio-temporal continuity (*‘Proper Names’*, p. 591). Likewise, Searle mentions in passing that ‘even if it is a *de re* metaphysical necessity that [Aristotle] had a certain mother and father, that tells us nothing at all about how [his] name refers to that man and not a bar stool’ (*‘Proper Names and Intentionality’*, p. 317).

friend Aristotle a drink, or in arguing abstract points of essential identity.

Searle's argument for 'looseness' in decisions about the correct application of proper names reflects exactly this practical orientation, accommodating the shifting contexts of a name's use and different priorities of its utterers.<sup>20</sup> In order for proper names to fulfill the function of 'pegs' for description, as Searle desires, his account must allow the addition and subtraction of particular descriptions from their associated cluster. This pragmatic concern obviously entails less stringent requirements for linguistic identity than would apply in identifying an object or person's essential qualities: using proper names requires nothing more than a rough consensus on apparent qualities. By this understanding, Searle's theory requires no commitment one way or another regarding the essential qualities of a proper name's referent: 'proper names', that is, 'refer without so far raising the issue of what the object is'.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, there is at least one important point in 'Proper Names' where pragmatic and metaphysical necessity seem to bump up against one another. Searle initially rejects Frege's sense/reference interpretation of naming on the grounds that it makes a single description analytically true of the referent, despite the fact that the quality described will inevitably only be 'contingent' – clearly a metaphysical assessment. This is where Kripke's confusion takes hold, since he assumes throughout the second lecture of *Naming and Necessity* that Searle's parenthetical comment immediately afterwards (that 'it is a necessary fact that Aristotle has the logical sum, inclusive disjunction, of properties commonly attributed to him') should be read in the same metaphysical light. But this interpretation strikes me as wrong: Searle focuses overwhelmingly in the

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<sup>20</sup> 'Proper Names', p. 591.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 591.

surrounding passages on pragmatic criteria for naming, so it seems more coherent to assume that while Searle's argument about Frege refers to metaphysical necessity, the parenthetical comment that follows reverts to discussing necessity in linguistic terms.

Searle could plausibly give a rationale for this switch that was grounded in the functional conception of proper names outlined above. In terms of the first statement, he does not have to reject contingent descriptions wholesale to reject analytically wedging each proper name to a single contingent description. Assuming that such names are supposed to accommodate a maximum range of possible descriptions, in order to maximize the number of ways they can effectively be used, identifying a name with some contingent description risks foreclosing a potentially justifiable use. While Aristotle may or may not actually have been Alexander's teacher, for example, Searle would presumably want 'Aristotle' to remain capable of accommodating either of the equally contingent descriptions as part of the total cluster associated with the philosopher's name.

Searle's parenthetical comment about 'necessity' likewise seems perfectly consistent with his pragmatic discussion of naming. Based on the rest of his article, we can reasonably assume that by 'Aristotle' he means something like 'the person that meets a weighted majority of the descriptions we associate with the proper name Aristotle'. In that case, his parenthetical comment reads as a restatement of previous explanations: for Searle, if someone is coherently to be called Aristotle, then they must necessarily have at least some of the characteristics we conventionally attribute to him. This seems entirely consistent with our everyday notions about how names work, which rule out arbitrarily referring to New York as 'Aristotle'. There is certainly nothing in either 'Proper Names' or 'Proper Names and Intentionality' to suggest that

Searle takes ‘Aristotle’ as meaning ‘the person possessing those qualities essential to Aristotlehood’ – an assumption that underwrites much of Kripke’s modal argument against cluster theory.

Having gotten Searle out from under the shadow of self-contradiction, we can extrapolate a rough sketch of how he might directly account for transworld naming. Without considering the extensive philosophical literature on counterpart theory, it seems to me – perhaps naïvely – that possible worlds are relatively unproblematic for the cluster theory of names: when presented with some hypothetical alternate world, Searle would most likely approach determining its population’s names in the same way he treats historical debate (or everyday confusion about identity) in this world. If someone in an alternate world possesses a weighted majority of the characteristics we conventionally associate with a proper name ( $\Phi$ ), prioritized on the basis of either personal deliberation or interpersonal discussion, then a speaker from this world could comfortably recognize or refer to them as  $\Phi$  on the basis of these characteristics.

Suppose, for example, that Searle and some other members of his linguistic community at Berkeley conceived of an alternate world. In it, Nichomachus’s son became an Olympian instead of a philosopher, but still founded a famous institution called the Lycaeum (a gymnasium) and wrote theoretical texts on wrestling. Searle & co. might legitimately decide that this was indeed Aristotle – or not, depending on how important the *Nichomachean Ethics* is to their conception of his identity.<sup>22</sup> And on some other occasion, for some other purpose, they might decide differently. These debates about identity would not need to be worked out in advance. In fact, they could easily arise because Searle had simply applied the name ‘Aristotle’ to

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<sup>22</sup> For one example, see ‘Proper Names and Intentionality’, p. 316.

this hypothetical person – based on his fitting a weighted majority of descriptions associated with the name – and then met with disagreement.

I would argue that this example reflects cluster theory's satisfaction of our intuitive desire for looseness in the identity criteria we use to name people in other possible worlds. It certainly does not commit us to identifying Aristotle or Hitler on the basis of a single, unchanging description. Admittedly, cluster theory does not immediately make all names rigid designators, i.e. in the way associated above with the standard meter. But it does suggest how speakers might begin discussing what constitutes a person's essence, which could lead to consensus on a set of descriptions for use as necessary and sufficient criteria of his or her metaphysical identity. Given such a consensus, speakers would have a cluster-based name that rigidly designated every possible person who met these criteria – presumably accompanied by convincing arguments for anyone who disagreed with the name's consequent scope.

In this paper, I have argued that cluster theory suffers from a double handicap when responding to the metaphysical critique in *Naming and Necessity*: Kripke's misleading interpretation of Searle's language (a more specific word for 'language' should've been used here; or why not just say "...interpretation of Searle's use of 'necessity'"), compounded by Searle's own oblique self-defence. Based on his overall approach to the pragmatic application of names, I nevertheless believe that Searle's theory provides a workable model for the identification of individuals in other possible worlds, removing much of the intuitive bite in Kripke's appeal to modal arguments. Although this hardly strikes a decisive blow for the cluster theory of proper names over Kripke's 'causal chain' alternative, it might at least help us think more clearly about the persistent problem of Aristotle's identity.

# Does van Fraassen's Constructive Empiricism Ask Scientists For Too Much?

**Megan Blomfield**

According to scientific realism, our scientific theories aim at truth, and accepting a theory entails believing that it is true and that the entities described by it are real. Van Fraassen disagrees with this conception. He argues in favour of a version of scientific antirealism which he calls 'constructive empiricism'. In this paper, I will look at van Fraassen's argument for antirealism and why it causes him to mark an epistemic distinction between the observable and unobservable entities described and postulated by scientific theories. I will then consider some criticisms of van Fraassen's position, and conclude that his distinction between the observable and the unobservable can be upheld, but that the epistemic attitude he requires of scientists is simply too demanding.

## Constructive Empiricism

Van Fraassen's main reason for advocating scientific antirealism is the argument from the underdetermination of theory by evidence. This argument runs:

**P1** There are always an infinite number of empirically equivalent but incompatible theories that can be proposed to explain some empirical phenomena

**P2** Empirical equivalence implies evidential equivalence

**C1** There is no evidence to support one particular theory over its empirically equivalent rivals

Theory choice is therefore radically underdetermined. Van Fraassen devotes most of his article 'To Save the Phenomena' to giving examples that support P1, showing that there *are* such 'non-trivial cases of empirical equivalence' of logically incompatible theories.<sup>1</sup> P2 states that theory choice cannot be determined by superempirical virtues such as simplicity or explanatory power. I will have cause to return to this premise later.

Van Fraassen argues that the underdetermination argument should lead one to adopt an antirealist stance towards science. If there is no evidence that warrants choosing a particular theory over its rivals, then all that you can say about a theory is that it is empirically adequate – van Fraassen says that a theory 'saves the phenomena'. To be empirically adequate it is only necessary that a theory tells the truth about observable things; since you cannot *know* that it is the correct theory, accepting it does not entail any ontological commitment to unobservable entities. This is van Fraassen's constructive empiricism: science does not involve seeking truth and accepting theories as true, rather it seeks theories which are empirically adequate and they are accepted as no more than this. A theory does not need to be true to be good.

It is important to understand that van Fraassen is not a *metaphysical* antirealist. He agrees that there is a fact of the matter as to whether a theory is true or not and that the unobservable entities that theories postulate *might* exist; it is just that we are not in a position to *know*. Van Fraassen is a semantic realist – he maintains that a theory should be understood literally and that it means what it says – however, he argues that you can do this whilst remaining an epistemic antirealist, and he draws the epistemic line down

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<sup>1</sup> Bas van Fraassen, 'To Save the Phenomena', *The Journal of Philosophy* 73, (1976): 623-632, p. 632.

the observable/unobservable divide. We can believe that our scientific theories represent the observable truthfully; but concerning the unobservable, we can only accept what our scientific theories tell us, without ever knowing whether or not it is true.

## Objections

A possible objection to constructive empiricism attacks P2 of the underdetermination argument. Many philosophers of science (and scientists) argue that there are superempirical virtues that can be used to decide between two empirically equivalent theories and that therefore empirical equivalence *does not* imply evidential equivalence. The superempirical virtues might include simplicity, explanatory power or elegance. So, for example, one could argue that if theory T is better at explaining the phenomena than its empirically equivalent rival theories, this counts as evidence in favour of T, and therefore is reason to choose T and believe that it is true. This is an argument made by Paul Churchland, who insists that ‘‘empirical adequacy’ is only one epistemic virtue among others of equal or comparable importance’ and that a theory should therefore be judged on all of its merits.<sup>2</sup>

Van Fraassen has an answer for this objection, however. In ‘The Pragmatics of Explanation’ he argues that explanation is a pragmatic virtue. Explanations are answers to ‘why’ questions. They depend on the context in which they are asked, and what counts as an explanation for one person may not count as an explanation for another. There are therefore no ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’ for a

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<sup>2</sup> Paul M Churchland, ‘The Ontological Status of Unobservables: In Praise of the Superempirical Virtues’, in Paul M Churchland and Clifford A. Hooker (eds.), *Images of science: essays on realism and empiricism, with a reply from Bas C. van Fraassen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 35.

particular theory to explain a phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> In the end, explanatory power only gives *pragmatic* grounds for theory choice, which is not sufficient reason to believe that a theory is true. Van Fraassen would presumably argue that other proposed superempirical virtues such as simplicity or elegance are also subjective and depend on pragmatic considerations, so cannot provide *evidence* in favour of a theory either. A particular theory might be simpler and easier to use, but this does not mean that this theory is true. The only *objective and epistemic* virtue of a theory is empirical adequacy. I conclude that P2 can be defended, and it seems that the underdetermination argument is sound.

Those wanting to reject constructive empiricism must therefore find a way of attacking van Fraassen's position whilst accepting the underdetermination argument, by arguing that the conclusion van Fraassen draws from the argument is illegitimate. One such argument, also made by Churchland, objects that the distinction van Fraassen makes between observable and unobservable entities cannot be supported. Churchland argues that there *are* good reasons to adopt scientific antirealism, but that these reasons apply equally to both the unobservable *and* the observable parts of our theories, so that our observational ontology is '*exactly as dubious* as our non-observational ontology'.<sup>4</sup>

Churchland raises the problem of the theory-ladenness of observation, which dictates that our experiments and observations are so deeply embedded in theory that we inevitably make assumptions about even what we actually observe. He also points to the problem of induction, arguing that even theories which are simply

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<sup>3</sup> Bas van Fraassen, 'The Pragmatics of Explanation', in Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper and J.D. Trout (eds.), *Philosophy of science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 322.

<sup>4</sup> Churchland, p.36.

accepted as empirically adequate still go beyond the evidence, as they are taken to save all the phenomena past, present and future, whether observed or not.<sup>5</sup> Churchland argues that in reality there is no epistemological or ontological difference between observable entities, unobservable entities, or entities that could be observed but aren't. It is not legitimate for van Fraassen to be sceptical in this selective manner. In addition, Churchland asks, why can't we just say that our scientific instruments extend our sensory apparatus? It is only an accident of biology that humans aren't born with an inbuilt electron microscope.<sup>6</sup> Van Fraassen's distinction is therefore based on a contingent fact of human physiology.

I think that van Fraassen can easily answer these objections. There may be reasons to be sceptical about both the observable and the unobservable parts of our scientific theories, but we are just more likely to get it wrong about the unobservable. Scientific instruments like microscopes are designed according to scientific theories which, according to the underdetermination argument, we cannot know to be correct. When we use scientific instruments, not only is it possible that our senses could be misleading us or that we could be making the wrong assumptions about what we observe, it is also possible that the instruments could be malfunctioning, or that the theories which they were designed in accordance with could be false. If we are going to believe *anything*, then we are certainly more justified in believing what we can observe. Furthermore, van Fraassen can point out that his distinction is based on the simple but crucial fact that this *is* the way humans are. Yes, if we had been born with an inbuilt electron microscope we would be able to observe and therefore accept the existence of infinitely smaller entities than we can as it is. But humans

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

are not like this. This is not an arbitrary distinction: of course our epistemic beliefs will depend on the way we are. Van Fraassen is not saying that there is an *ontological* distinction between what we can or cannot observe. The distinction is purely epistemic. It is about what we can justifiably *believe*, and this depends on the epistemic community, and what we can or would be able to observe.

A more important question which I think must be asked is whether the epistemic position advocated by constructive empiricism is actually *possible* for scientists engaging in current scientific practice to adopt. If not, this would be a powerful argument against van Fraassen's view, because although the philosophy of science is not just about describing the scientific method but about examining it critically, I think that it is nevertheless important for philosophers of science to make realistic demands on the method they are examining.

It is certainly possible for a scientist to accept and use a theory without believing it to be true. Newtonian mechanics is still a very important tool for physicists, even though they know that it is essentially false. However, there seem to be some cases in which it is unreasonable to ask scientists to suspend belief about unobservable entities, even if they cannot be certain that the theory they are using is true. In 'When Explanation Leads to Inference',<sup>7</sup> Nancy Cartwright argues that there are some cases of explanation where *we are* justified in saying that the entities involved exist – namely in cases of causal explanation. Causal explanations *don't make sense* unless you infer the existence of the cause. For example, it makes no sense to explain that a track observed in a cloud chamber is caused by a particle,

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<sup>7</sup> Nancy Cartwright, 'When Explanation Leads to Inference', in *How the Laws of Physics Lie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 87-99.

unless you accept the existence of that particle.<sup>8</sup> To accept a causal explanation without accepting the existence of the cause would be irrational, and since causal explanations are crucial in science, van Fraassen's constructive empiricism fails to account for a major area of scientific practice. Ian Hacking, in 'Experimentation and Scientific Realism',<sup>9</sup> argues that there is another major area of scientific practice in which necessary to adopt realism with regards to unobservable entities: when these entities are manipulatable. It is irrational not to believe in an entity that you are manipulating.

It is easy to undermine both Cartwright and Hacking's arguments, by pointing out that causal explanations and the manipulation of unobservable entities rely on a large amount of background theory. We therefore return to the problem of underdetermination of theory by evidence: without knowing that your theory is correct, you cannot be certain that you have isolated the right cause, or that you are manipulating the entity that you think you are manipulating.

However, I think that it is nevertheless the case that asking scientists not to believe that there is *something* that is acting as a cause or which they are manipulating – even if believing anything the theory tells you about the unobservable entity beyond this cannot be justified – is asking too much. If those engaging in current scientific practice simply cannot withhold their belief in the unobservable entities which they experiment with, then it is unreasonable to ask them to adopt the epistemic position advocated by constructive empiricism.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> Ian Hacking, 'Experimentation and Scientific Realism', in Martin Curd and J A Cover (eds.), *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), pp. 1153-1168.

## Conclusion

I conclude that the epistemic distinction van Fraassen draws between observable and unobservable entities can be upheld. Though we may debate about exactly where to draw the observable/unobservable line, van Fraassen is fundamentally right in that belief in observable entities is more justified than belief in unobservables. However, I don't think we can expect scientists to be able to adopt the antirealist position advocated by constructive empiricism. Just as the sheer impossibility of suspending belief in everyday objects like tables and chairs is the best argument against scepticism about external observable objects, the impossibility of suspending belief in some of the unobservable entities postulated by their theories is a strong argument in favour of scientists adopting realism about certain unobservable entities. Van Fraassen must find a way of reconciling his position with realistic scientific practice, and a reasonable epistemic demand on the attitudes of scientists.

# Lust and Excess: Calibrating the Soul

**Adam De Luca**

## A Purview of Lust and Sexual Desire in Platonic Conceptions of Beauty and the Soul

The term lust has several applications in ordinary language. This paper deals solely with lust as it relates to sexual desire, and not in the broader use of the term as in phrases such as ‘lust for life’, or ‘lust for money’. While there is a connection between these notions, the link is not strong enough to allow for their inclusion in a short span. There are two ways of thinking of the term ‘lust’. One way is to define it as any strong sexual desire, and the other is to define it as ‘wrongful’ sexual desire. I opt for the latter so that one may see how Plato defines what it means to have a wrongful desire within his psychological framework. Simon Blackburn, in his book *Lust*, a volume of the Oxford series on the seven deadly sins, opts for the former. However, as a matter of philosophy, it seems somewhat peculiar to define lust as any strong sexual desire, because then there can be no real basis for disagreement about which desires one ought or ought not to have. As this paper will show, Simon Blackburn confuses the issue by taking this definition. Thus, lust is appropriated as that ‘part of sexual desire that is the *morally irresponsible entertainment of strong sexual desire*<sup>1</sup>'. This paper will first outline a schema of how lust is to be seen as wrongful sexual desire, against Simon Blackburn, then will proceed to apply this to an interpretation of Plato’s view on the matter. I will look into how this notion of lust can fit into a Platonic system of moral psychology with attention

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<sup>1</sup> Gooch, P.W. *When does sexual desire become lust?* (Draft Only), p 4.

paid to the implications for an anti-somatic interpretation of Plato, and for his metaphysics with regards to the tripartite soul and the Form of the Good.

As of yet, the phrase, ‘wrongful sexual desire’ has no content because it has not been outlined what it is that makes it wrong. This paper will argue that this morally corrupt form of sexual desire is in accordance with Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean. Lust is therefore, *over-strong* sexual desire. Aristotle, in Book II of his Nicomachean Ethics, formulates the Doctrine of the Mean as follows:

Excellence, then, is a state concerned with choice [...] being determined by reason and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices; that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while excellence both finds and chooses that which is intermediate.<sup>2</sup>

Lust is a state in excess of properly proportioned sexual desire. It is therefore entailed that unspecified sexual desire is neither good nor bad of itself, but that there are good and bad cultivations of it such that it becomes good or bad. Of course, Aristotle gives different examples to prove his point as he also mentions, ‘with regards to honour and dishonour the mean is proper pride, the excess is known as a sort of empty vanity, and the deficiency is undue humility’.<sup>3</sup> The same method shows that proper sexual

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, ‘Nicomachean Ethics’, trans. W.D. Ross in Jonathon Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol. 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1106b 36 – 1107a 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 1107b 22-23.

desire lies between lust (excessive desire) and repulsion (defective desire). Lust is a state in which a person is so confused by her passions that she wants to satisfy the sexual desire without considering the rational conditions or consequences. A lustful state is outside of proper rational bounds, and a lustful action is one that lacks proper rational considerations, proceeding from a lustful state. One example of a lustful state is in a person whose mind is preoccupied with sexual urges and images that dominate an *excessive* portion of his mind; this entails a lack of proper consideration for other relevant rational factors. Thus, an example of a lustful action arising from such a state would be someone who satisfies his desires in an immediate way by sexually assaulting someone. He does not give proper consideration to the well-being of the victim, nor to the negative effects that follow from such a heinous act. In a state of extreme lust, one can do nothing else but immediately attempt to satisfy the urge at any and all cost. Lust in general, however, is a state in which the person excludes other considerations to a morally irresponsible extent; for lust blinds a person to some or all of the relevant rational concerns. A person need not be in an all-out frenzied fit of passion to be in a state of lustfulness.

With respect to Simon Blackburn, this paper disagrees with the eminent contemporary philosopher on a couple of points. In fact, from the introduction to his book, we discover that Blackburn takes on the modest task of saving lust's reputation. He states that his purpose is:

[...]to clean off some of the mud, to rescue it from the echoing denunciations of old men of the deserts, to deliver it from the pallid and envious confessors of Rome and the disgust of the Renaissance, to destroy the stocks and pillories of the Puritans, to separate it from other things that we know drag it down (for we shall find that there are worse things than lust, things that make pure

lust itself impure), and so to lift it from the category of sin to that of virtue.<sup>4</sup>

This task is not so daunting when one takes into consideration Blackburn's definition of lust: '[...]we are talking about the enthusiastic desire, the desire that infuses the body, for sexual activity and its pleasures for their own sake, and from now on that is what we take lust to mean'.<sup>5</sup> But is this an adequate definition? It is correct insofar as Blackburn could be talking about a psychological state. However, his focus is too broad; Blackburn thinks that he has found the Achilles' heel of traditional approaches to lust when he adds that the desire seeks to fulfill 'pleasures for their own sake'. But if one has exercised reason and has limited their desire to the correct circumstances, then this is no more than proper sexual desire. Of course sexual desire, as it is a desire, seeks satisfaction! But, as we shall see later, it is a matter of whether the agent allows the satisfaction of this desire to be his *ultimate* end. Lust is outside reasonable limits of modesty and proper sexual desire. Just exactly what Blackburn means when he says that the desire is 'enthusiastic' is quite vague, so I can only take it to mean strong. But a 'strong' desire is not the same as an exclusive desire that renders the agent incapable of desiring something else, such as the good of one's sexual partner, or that causes the agent to ignore relevant rational considerations.

The reason we must stick to the model of lust as wrongful is because of the philosophical confusion that arises from taking a definition such as the one given by Blackburn. The confusion that arises from Blackburn's definition is this: in order to save lust's reputation, one must show that strong sexual desires that were historically

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<sup>4</sup> Blackburn, Simon, *Lust: the seven deadly sins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p 19.

considered wrong are not currently so. However, lust has not been saved since all that has been accomplished is an exhibition of the errors that people have made in the past in misappropriating which actions are properly wrong or acceptable. This is no more than a cultural/historical approach to the question of lust. Furthermore, simply due to the fact that every commentator on lust was himself dealing with his contemporary times and attitudes, the opinions of people in the past may seem extreme or archaic. Each commentator, including Plato, struggled to define the bounds and limits of sexual desire and lust. To paraphrase Paul Gooch in one of his lectures on Platonic moral psychology: 'Plato has real psychological insight although his remedies are extreme. But you must realize that he was himself struggling with these very same issues that we are now discussing'. Plato wants to know where lust comes from, and how to control it. Therefore, as noted, it is helpful to designate lust as that 'part of sexual desire that is the morally irresponsible entertainment of strong sexual desire'.<sup>6</sup> Philosophically speaking, we are interested to know how these wrongful desires come about. Thus, it is impossible to save lust from moral reprehensibility, as it is defined as that part of sexual desire that is not saveable. In Book II of his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle recognizes this:

not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy...for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses of deficiencies of them.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p 4.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics', trans. W.D. Ross in Jonathon Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol. 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1107a1 9-12

This is the launching point then, from which Plato can be interpreted, as his thought appears to already have contained the genesis of the Aristotelian model of ethics. As Gooch rightly points out:

the answer lies in the cultivation and refinement of desire. Whenever we learn a new task we make the move from self-conscious awkwardness to knowledgeable ease. The cultivation of sexual desire need be no different, as we learn to desire knowledgeably without having to do a mental check on the nature of our desire. And knowledgeable desire may have a depth and maturity of tone that blind passion lacks.<sup>8</sup>

Quite clearly, then, the distinction between the proper lover and the ‘luster’ is based on habit formation, and on the cultivation of a state of proper and well-calibrated sexual desire, keeping over-strong desires in check. Aristotle’s treatises may have been more straightforward, but Plato’s dialogue form carries with it more richness of detail as only literature can, as we shall see in the animal imagery with regards to the appetites. As such, there are many nuances and issues that need to be dealt with, specifically his tendency toward anti-somatic views. Although Plato himself struggled with the ideas and origins of lust, some of the fundamental features that he points out through his dialogues remain relevant. Rather than trying to discern (and likely mischaracterize as Blackburn often does) what people’s attitudes to sexuality were or are, we have looked at the defining features of lust. As this is a paper on Plato, we shall look at how and why lust, as over-strong sexual desire, is morally reprehensible in view of his works.

Plato’s *Phaedrus* details an unusual Platonic dialogue in that it is set outside the city walls of Athens in the

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<sup>8</sup> Gooch, P.W. *When does sexual desire become lust?* (Draft Only), p 5.

countryside. This romantic atmosphere sets the tone for Socrates to be coaxed into giving fantastic oratorical speeches on the topics of love, lust and philosophy. Part of the oratory involves describing the experience of how sexual desire impacts the soul using a description of two horses and a charioteer. The metaphor is limited, as Socrates recognizes that ‘to describe what the soul actually is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way.’<sup>9</sup> The limitations of this metaphor make interpretation interesting and difficult. As a simple representation of what a person feels when desiring another person sexually, Plato seems to be describing the clichéd scenario of a man with an angel on his right shoulder and a devil on his left. There is the good white horse that desires to do good things, and there is the bad black horse that desires to do bad things; caught in the middle, trying to rein in the beasts is the charioteer, the symbol of the person’s ability to will either way. While this might be a fairly good depiction of how we feel, the tale does not lend itself to this interpretation. If this were the case, the white horse would not simply follow the good decisions of the charioteer, but would actively advise him, and the black horse would not be tamed but would be killed or banished in a puff of smoke back to the hellfire. It is easy to see the black horse as strictly evil, especially given Plato’s negative description of it. However, this is not the case.

A better description would align this tale with the Platonic conception of the soul. The charioteer is the representation of reason in the soul, the black horse is appetite in the soul, and the white horse is spirit in the soul – no one of these parts constitutes the whole. One must also keep in mind that this is not a ‘homuncular model of

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, ‘Phaedrus’, trans. Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff in John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 246a.

the mind’;<sup>10</sup> one man is not composed of independent ‘little men’. Plato believes that we should ‘liken the soul to the *natural* union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer’ [my emphasis].<sup>11</sup> The reason I claim this is because under a system of independent homunculi, one could hold the belief that a person could kill the black horse, or any other member of this ‘committee’, as if they were not all connected to the essence of an embodied person. There is no solid foundation for this homuncular interpretation in Plato, as it is clear that in the *Phaedrus* the horses and the charioteer are all aspects of the unified embodied soul, and as such, are all essential for any embodied person.<sup>12</sup> Blackburn acknowledges in his commentary on the animal imagery of the *Phaedrus* that, ‘the charioteer needs his horses’.<sup>13</sup> Also, one should keep in mind that Plato is not positing a soul where there is simply a jumble of appetites, reasonable desires and unreasonable desires as some sort of disordered, homogeneous mixture. In positing rational, appetitive and spirited parts of the soul, Plato is explaining the phenomenon of having two distinct desires or emotions for different and sometimes

<sup>10</sup> Blackburn, Simon, *Lust: the seven deadly sins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 33. Blackburn maintains that the Platonic soul is composed of homunculi (little men) that try to tell the person what do. These little men are faculties of the soul.

<sup>11</sup> Plato, ‘Phaedrus’, trans. Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff in John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (ed.), in *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 246a

<sup>12</sup> There is a debate regarding whether Socrates has an appetitive soul. Discussion of this is beyond the view of this paper, because the little evidence we have is too confusing. However, it is entailed by my non-homuncular view that as an embodied person, he must have an appetitive soul. If Socrates is the ideal embodied person, then his appetitive soul must be properly maintained such that its desires are in accordance with his reason.

<sup>13</sup> Blackburn, Simon, *Lust: the seven deadly sins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 39.

contradictory things by positing different sources within the one person:

sometimes there are thirsty people who don't wish to drink [...] Isn't it that there is something in their soul, bidding them to drink, and something different, forbidding them to do so, that overrules the thing that bids?...Hence it isn't unreasonable for us to claim that they are two, and different from one another...the spirited part [is] a third thing in the soul that is by nature the helper of the rational part [...]]<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, Plato puts forth a theory of the embodied soul as having three different distinct parts, none of which act as agents independent from a complete embodied person, but rather are all essential to the constitution of an embodied soul.

Plato's psychology ought to have a direct influence, then, on how we interpret his ideas on the nature of lust. The rational part of the soul seeks the highest possible good at any given time, whereas the appetitive part of the soul seeks what appears as the most immediate good. This corresponds to the actual good versus the apparent good. For example, the rational soul would desire wealth for the good things that it can procure, whereas the appetitive soul would desire wealth in itself. We have defined lust as that state of sexual desire which is not sensitive to appropriate rational considerations, such that even entertaining lustful thoughts, or actively engaging in lustful states is morally irresponsible. This sort of state would derive from the appetitive part of the soul, which is 'companion to wild

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<sup>14</sup> Plato, 'Republic', trans. G.M.A. Grube (rev. Reeve) in John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), IV 439c-d, 441a.

boasts and indecency,'<sup>15</sup> and does not naturally listen to the deliberations of the rational soul. Plato describes the dark horse, stating that he is '[...] shaggy around the ears—deaf as a post—and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined'.<sup>16</sup> When the dark horse sees the boy, who is the object of sexual desire, it immediately seeks sexual gratification: 'it leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex'.<sup>17</sup> In this instance, sex is the most immediate manifestation of how to satisfy the lustful desire. Plato shows, however, that through reason's tempering influence, the person will not listen to the dark horse and will not opt to engage in sex:

When the charioteer sees that face, his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-control...at the same time [he] has to pull the reins back so fiercely that both horses are set on their haunches, one falling back voluntarily with no resistance, but the other insolent and quite unwilling.<sup>18</sup>

Is Plato proposing an anti-somatic view that is against a union of the bodies (i.e. copulation) in favour of, perhaps, a strict union of minds? Is Plato suggesting that sexual desire should not be aimed at sex? Is lust, then, simply sexual desire aimed at copulation? The unflattering description of the dark horse, identified with appetitive soul, may suggest this. However, Plato leaves us with another

<sup>15</sup> Plato, 'Phaedrus', trans. Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff in John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (ed.) *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 253e.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 253e.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 254a-b.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 254b-c.

puzzle, when at the end of the *Phaedrus*, he describes the fate of lovers who indeed engage in copulation:

In death they are wingless, when they leave the body, but their wings are bursting to sprout, so the prize they have won from the madness of love is considerable, because those who have begun the sacred journey in lower heaven may not by law be sent into darkness for the journey under the earth; their lives are bright and happy as they travel together, and thanks to their love they will grow wings together when the time comes.<sup>19</sup>

So what exactly is going on? If Plato is suggesting that the dark horse is bad, and that giving in to its urges is bad, then how does he salvage any goodness? Plato seems to be attempting a balancing act between the satisfaction of bodily desires, and the desires of rational soul.

This is where I think the tension lies in Plato, as he is himself struggling with notions of lust, sexual desire, pleasures of the body and pleasures of the soul, while still attempting to keep the primacy of the soul's reverence and awe for the Form of Beauty itself. At times he leans one way, and at others he leans another way. In the *Phaedrus*, this struggle manifests itself in an advocacy of a life of celibacy. But is this anti-somatism tantamount to a view of the body as evil? Is the slogan *sema soma* (the body is a tomb) the end of the story? The *Phaedrus* concludes with a metaphysical quandary because we know from the *Republic* that all things emanate from the Form of the Good which is itself virtually everything. In Book IV, Plato writes, ‘...you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it...’<sup>20</sup> So,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 256d-e.

<sup>20</sup> Plato, ‘*Republic*’, trans. G.M.A. Grube in John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (ed.) *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing,

all things that emanate from the Form of the Good are themselves good, and the embodied soul is one such thing. But if the embodied soul, which includes appetitive soul, is essential to the embodied person, then how is it that sex, the union of two bodies, is not advocated? At the end of the *Phaedrus* we seem inclined to think that Plato views all desire for sex as lust. How accurate is this? For the answer to this quandary, Plato's *Symposium* provides a fuller account.

The *Symposium* is set at a drinking party. In this loose and relaxed context, Socrates delivers a brilliant speech on the topic of *eros* (erotic love), that he claims the priestess Diotima had taught him. Plato here introduces the idea of a 'ladder' up to the Form of Beauty that begins with the desire for a single body. This whole approach begins with a general attitude and argument that runs throughout the Platonic corpus: 1) All people desire to be happy. 2) The good makes you happy. 3) Therefore, all people desire the good. 4) When people desire something it is because they believe that it will bring some sort of good. 5) By extension, when people make mistakes, it is because they mistake what is good for them.<sup>21</sup> If people desire beautiful things, it is because beauty is how the good appears to us. Erotic love is the specific form of desire that is for beautiful things because they are good: 'In a word, then, love is wanting to possess the good forever'.<sup>22</sup> Since love seeks good things which appear beautiful insofar as they are good so that it

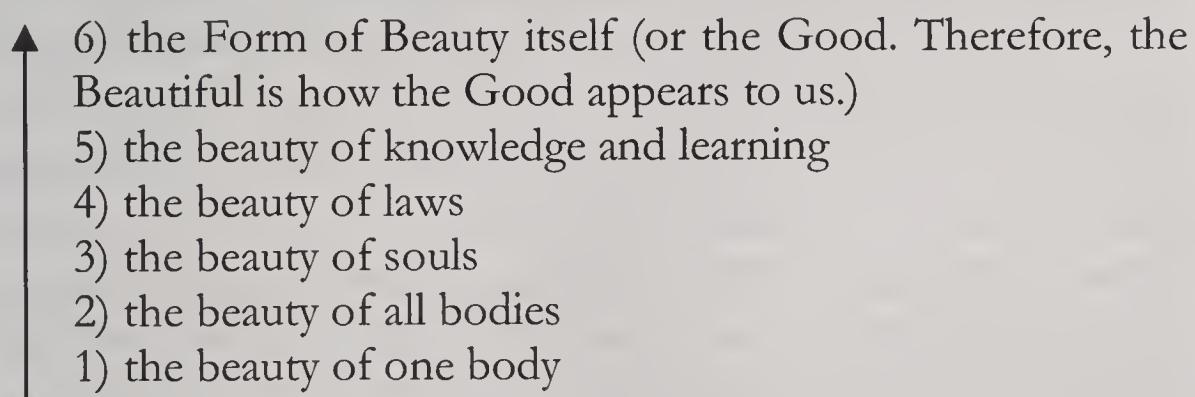
1997), VI 509b. Plato's metaphysical theories cannot here be debated. The discussion of the Form of the Good is relevant insofar as I want to establish that the body and embodied life must themselves be good.

<sup>21</sup> The evidence for this argument takes us too far outside the scope of the paper. An interesting discussion is found in P.W. Gooch, *The Perplexities of Desire in the Meno*. See *Symposium* 201, 205 or, *Gorgias* 467e-468e or, *Meno* 77,78.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, 'Symposium', trans. Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff in John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (ed.) *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 206a.

can have them forever, the function of love of the body is ‘reproduction and birth in beauty’<sup>23</sup> as reproduction allows us a form of physical, earthly immortality. Plato gives very positive connotations to this: ‘...when a man and a woman come together in order to give birth, this is a godly affair’.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, sexual intercourse is good. There are no excessive or morally corrupt connotations to this description.

However, Plato holds that the kind of good that will be obtained by sex is deficient with respect to the goods achieved by an appreciation of the more abstract forms of beauty. This idea is explained in Diotima’s description of an ascent from the particular and most deficient forms of beauty to the most abstract – the Form of Beauty itself. Diotima describes this as an ascent, which is diagrammed below:



We all start at step 1. The actualization of beauty is most actualized the higher you climb. The beauty in all the instances of beauty emanates from the form of Beauty itself, i.e. the lower levels are deficient actualizations of the Beautiful when considered relative to Beauty itself.<sup>25</sup>

As Diotima’s ascent demonstrates, the function of love is birth in beauty. The achievement of beauty at any

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 206e

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 206c.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 210a-e

stage in the ascent is the appropriate successful production of that which is beautiful (and good). At the lowest, bodily level, this successful production is the natural result of physical sexual activity – children.<sup>26</sup> However, this production is deficient compared to the production resulting from the achievement of higher levels, say for example the production of virtue in others, or the production of beautiful ideas, simply because it lacks a high level of universality in Beauty. This universality increases progressively up the ladder to the end of the ascent – the vision of ultimate Beauty itself. Thus, Plato advocates an ascent from the lower mysteries where one fixates on people, up to the higher mysteries where one fixates on abstractions. Applying the tripartite soul and the chariot metaphor from the *Phaedrus* to this schema, it is clear that the dark horse is gripped by the beauty of one body, failing to see past it, whereas the charioteer feels the attraction to the body, but eventually moves on to the soul and up the rest of the ladder. Thus it is possible for rationality to permit sex. Plato is not outright advocating celibacy, but

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<sup>26</sup> I have only mentioned the production possible in heterosexual sex. Brief mention should be made regarding the status of homosexual love. I contend that Plato believes homosexual union is more a union of minds than of bodies, as the charioteer of the *Phaedrus* ‘is carried back to the real nature of Beauty’ (254b). The birth in beauty of homosexuality is of ideas, using appreciation of the beauty of the body as a window to the beauty of souls. A fuller account of homosexuality in Plato is required to justify this view. However, to lend *prima facie* credibility to my view, consider the story of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. Socrates refuses to engage in sexual activity with him: ‘my night with Socrates went no further than if I had spent it with my own father or older brother!’ (219d). According to Alcibiades, Socrates ignited a ‘frenzy of philosophy’ in his soul (218b). When Alcibiades asked to be in a relationship with Socrates he only replied, ‘you offer me the merest appearance of beauty, and in return you want the thing itself, ‘gold in exchange for bronze’’ (218e). Socrates’ aim is higher than the body of Alcibiades, as he wishes to ignite in him a passion for the mind’s objects of attraction.

rather relegating sex to a subordinate position on the spectra of erotic desire. Therefore, the person who moderately listens to her appetitive soul and engages in sexual activity attains a lower sort of satisfaction than if she were a philosopher. But where does this leave lust? Lust is not simply desire for sex, but the *desire for sex as the ultimate good*. Lust subordinates higher goods to its own object of desire – sex. The wiser the person, the more she will be able to see past her temptations to make sex her idolatrous god.

Plato has not solved all the problems, however. Tension still remains as to the role of sex for the wise person. When the wise person has already reproduced, given birth in beauty, and seen past the beauty of bodies, does he ever again engage in sexual activity? One interpretation of Plato suggests that a child is born out of the good event of sexual union. In other words, the union itself is good. Therefore, the good of sexual union outside of reproduction is desirable for its own sake – a wise person could indeed desire sex after having already given birth in beauty in the body. But, it is quite clear that Plato advocates a subordination of the individual, which is in stark contrast to some of our contemporary views. What is entailed in this idea of subordination is a matter of nuanced interpretation, one that certainly involves recognizing that the individual is intrinsically good, though not the greatest good. Furthermore, when one climbs a ladder, one does not discard the rungs that one has moved past. Ascending the ladder of Beauty means that you incorporate all the prior levels into your journey. The ideal embodied person balances all of the ‘lesser’ goods because these goods apply to him at various levels of his metaphysical and psychological constitution. This constitution is structured such that it is a harmonized and properly ordered integration of each of these levels. Moving past one level of the ladder does not entail casting off the lower rungs of the ladder, but rather involves the recognition that this level is

not the ultimate good. I believe this interpretation is correct despite possible tensions in Plato to view the ascent in terms of casting off, as Plato himself uses language that may suggest this: ‘...he must think that this wild gaping after just one body is a small thing and despise it.’<sup>27</sup> However, given the context of the Platonic ideas expounded earlier, I suggest that Plato is not advocating casting off the desire for the individual body, but rather casting off the belief that possession of the individual body is the greatest good. If the language used by Plato is troubling or if the remedies he suggests are too extreme, one must realize, as acknowledged earlier, that he is himself struggling to articulate notions of lust and *eros*. The tendency towards an anti-somatic philosophy may surface in some places, but in general, I do not believe that Plato despises the body. Sexual desire, when viewed in light of the hierarchy of Beauty and insofar as this hierarchy is internalized in the embodied soul, is good.

As mentioned in the discussion of the *Phaedrus*, the embodied soul is composed of three essential parts. Plato does not advocate killing the appetitive soul, but rather seeks methods to tame it. This notion is in accordance with the Aristotelian model of virtue as earlier proposed – that by means of reason’s active tempering of appetites with the help of the spirited part, one can find the proper proportion between extremes. Plato is advocating a soul whose parts are harmonized in accordance with reason. The appetitive soul is properly calibrated through habituation, and the leadership of the rational soul is reinforced with education, such that it is not the case that one must constantly resist lustful desires, but that one is rarely in a lustful state to begin with. A lustful person has a *poorly calibrated soul that is not in arranged accordance with reason*. The process of correct calibration does not occur in each part of the soul independently, but rather concomitantly with the proper

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 210b.

arrangement or proportion of the parts, relative to each other, to form the ideal embodied whole. The virtuous person is the one whose rational, spirited and appetitive souls are well integrated.

On an anti-somatic interpretation of Plato, the definition of lust as Blackburn gives it is still morally irresponsible. There should not exist an enthusiastic desire for sex, as there should not be an appetitive soul that desires it; nor should sex be desired in any other way than as a necessary step that must be cast off as soon as its utility is exhausted. However, as I have argued, this is not the view that Plato puts forth. Lust is only a factor when one sees sex as the ultimate good, the consequence of which is to subsume all rational considerations to the immediate gratification of one's lustful desires. Plato's psychology in the *Pheadrus*, when interpreted in light of the metaphysics of the *Republic* and the philosophy of love in the *Symposium*, yields an interpretation that sexual desire becomes bad when our appetites take control of our reason; we enter a state that compels us to ignore things that rationally should be considered.

# The Restrictivist's Thesis

## Peter Dobozy

*There are two positions on whether free will is possible within a deterministic universe: compatibilism and incompatibilism. Compatibilism claims that free will can exist within a deterministic universe. Incompatibilism claims the contrary. Through the construction of the various compatibilist and incompatibilist theses, many implications inevitably result. In particular, some argue that accepting the incompatibilist position also entails accepting the corollary that free will is applicable to only a small subset of human actions thus leaving the majority of one's actions as determined or necessitated. This position is known as **restrictivism**. In what follows, I will examine a particular account of restrictivism developed by Peter Van Inwagen in his paper 'When is the Will Free?'*

In 'When is the Will Free?', Peter Van Inwagen claims that anyone who accepts the incompatibilist's position in regards to free will and determinism should also accept the additional claim that humans are rarely free to do other than they do. Through the use of a logical rule called Rule Beta, Van Inwagen develops three scenarios in which he claims human action is not free but necessitated. Furthermore, these three scenarios compose the majority of one's actions. Following his necessitated scenarios, Van Inwagen offers three types of scenarios in which it is likely that one is free to do otherwise. In what follows, I will offer a critical assessment of Van Inwagen's thesis. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that Van Inwagen's 'free' scenarios ultimately collapse onto the necessitated scenarios and thus mar any distinction. Lastly, I will consider a larger problem regarding the presuppositions with which Van Inwagen is working.

Let us begin by introducing rule Beta:

**From  $Np$  and  $N(p \rightarrow q)$  deduce  $Nq$** <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Van Inwagen, Peter. (1989). 'When is The Will Free?' In *Philosophical Perspectives* 3: 399-422. p 405

$Np$  stands for ‘ $p$  and no one has, or ever had, any choice about whether  $p$ .’<sup>2</sup>  $N(p \rightarrow q)$  is read as a standard conditional: *if* no one ever has, or ever had, any choice about whether  $p$  **then** no one ever had a choice about  $q$ . Using conditional elimination,<sup>3</sup> we deduce  $Nq$ .<sup>4</sup> By means of Rule Beta, Van Inwagen constructs a standard modal argument against compatibilism. We will forgo the reconstruction of the modal argument since its validity is not vital to the focus of this paper. Furthermore, the particular modal argument used by Van Inwagen is one of many possible incompatibilist arguments and is required only to demonstrate the use of Rule Beta. Regarding other arguments for incompatibilism that make no apparent use of Rule Beta, Van Inwagen claims that Rule Beta or some variation of it is implicit, if not explicit, in all arguments for incompatibilism.

Next, Van Inwagen develops his three situations where the agent acts out of necessity rather than of their own volition. The three types of actions are as follows: when the agent refrains from committing what the agent believes to be a morally reprehensible act, when the agent is compelled to one particular course of action due to an overwhelming desire, and when the agent acts more or less automatically, without any deliberation. Let’s consider the first case: morally reprehensible acts.

The general format of Van Inwagen’s first scenario, which he dubs C, is as follows:

**If** X regards A as an indefensible act, given the totality of relevant information available to him,

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 404

<sup>3</sup> Conditional elimination is one of the rules of Sentential Logic which states that if Q follows from P, and P is given, then we can deduce Q.

<sup>4</sup> Of course this does not entail validity or the truth of  $Nq$ , but this is beyond the scope of this paper.

and if he has no way of getting further relevant information, and if he lacks any positive desire to do A, and if he sees no objection to not doing A (again, given the totality of relevant information available to him), **then** X is not going to do A.<sup>5</sup>

Van Inwagen suggests that the modal status of C is nothing short of a necessary truth. Indeed it is difficult, if not impossible, to construct a counter example in which X proceeds to commit A. Nevertheless, a good paper would attempt to humour the reader. Suppose some counterexample  $\sim C$  is developed in which X proceeds to commit A for some reason R or because of some circumstance S. Van Inwagen argues that the antecedent of C could be modified to include the negations of these counter examples. Hence, the antecedent of C would include  $\sim R$  and  $\sim S$ . For example, assume I find it morally reprehensible to watch any film starring Chuck Norris. As a consequence of C, I have no choice about watching films starring Chuck Norris. Now suppose I am forced to watch The Delta Force<sup>6</sup> by the Gestapo or possibly to save someone's life. C would simply be modified to exclude such possibilities: the secret police will *not* force me to watch The Delta Force; no one's life is at stake and so on. Naturally, this line of reasoning can be extended to any  $\sim R$  and  $\sim S$ . Consequently, it does not appear possible to construct a counterexample which would disprove C or any permutation of C.

The second of Van Inwagen's three cases involves instances where X has such an overbearing desire to commit some action A, that X has no choice but to commit A. Let us consider a classic literary example. In Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, the Underground Man complains that his liver hurts. Despite the Underground

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 407

<sup>6</sup> A film starring Chuck Norris: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090927/>

Man's pain and his trust in the medical profession, he refrains from treatment simply 'out of wickedness'.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, against the Underground Man's better judgement, his knowledge of the situation, and the sheer irrationality of his decision, his refusal to be treated is necessitated by his 'wickedness.' Van Inwagen's second example, call it C2, can be generalized similarly to C:

**If** X has an overbearing desire D to commit A, and D will remain present and static through X's execution of A, and X will have no spontaneous desire  $\sim$ D, and no exogenous factor can or will influence D, **then** X is going to do A.<sup>8</sup>

Again, the negation of any possible circumstance under which the Underground Man chooses to be treated can be built into the antecedent of C2. For instance, that the Underground Man's wickedness will not diminish, will not be written by Leo Tolstoy and so on. Consequently, the second scenario appears equally as convincing as C.

The last of Van Inwagen's scenarios, C3, involves largely inconsequential actions. More specifically, Van Inwagen's third scenario involves situations where there is little or no need for deliberation; where the action in question is just the obvious thing to do or the person cannot help but resort to autopilot given the mundane and monotonous quality of the action. For example, consider when someone is putting on socks in the morning. Normally, one does not hesitate to think about which sock to put on first, or whether to put on socks before pants and so on. Such an insignificant task is hardly worth any deliberation and the agent more or less acts automatically, sometimes putting the right sock on first sometimes the left.

<sup>7</sup> Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (1993). *Notes From Underground*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Vintage Classics. p. 3

<sup>8</sup> Van Inwagen, p. 407

Naturally, it would not be difficult to construct an example that would attach significance and the need for deliberation to such a situation, but again, the negation of these counter-examples can be built into this type of scenario, or alternatively, such examples would simply be excluded due to the need for deliberation. Let us turn now to Van Inwagen's three cases in which he believes it is likely that we are free to do otherwise.

Van Inwagen labels the first of his 'free' instances as Buridan's Ass scenarios (we will call it F for short). F scenarios occur when 'someone wants each of two or more incompatible things and it isn't clear which one he should (try to) get.'<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, such cases involve interchangeable objects. Van Inwagen also includes in this category what he calls 'chocolate/vanilla cases',<sup>10</sup> where the objects may not be perfectly interchangeable but where there is a source of equally conflicting desires. For example, the desire to see a film in theatres as opposed to saving the five dollars otherwise spent on a watered down oversized beverage<sup>11</sup> and watching a film in the comfort of your own home.

The second class of cases, F2, involve duty versus inclination, which usually consist of, but are not limited to, instances of moral deliberation. For example, my inclination might be to watch hockey and drink beer whereas my duty is to meticulously edit this paper. The importance of this scenario is that the agent faces some sort of conflict where either decision entails certain advantages and disadvantages; presumably, the agent is torn between the two possible courses of action before finally choosing one.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 415

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 415

<sup>11</sup> In addition to other relevant costs, such as that for a movie ticket, transportation, etc.

The last of Van Inwagen's scenarios, F3, involve 'incommensurable values...a life of rational self-interest...versus the life of gift and sacrifice.'<sup>12</sup> For example, Superman has chosen to live a relatively selfless life, using his powers to protect the citizens of earth against impending danger. On the other hand, Superman could have used his powers to acquire wealth, rule the world and so on. Again, similarly to F2, the agent faces situations in which there is personal conflict and the need for deliberation.

For our first criticism we will consider an objection raised by Timothy O'Conner in his book *Persons and Causes*.<sup>13</sup> One of O'Conner's criticisms of Van Inwagen's first scenario suggests that given the conditions of C, X still has many apparent free choices available. For example, rather than X simply refraining from A, X could presumably commit B, D, E, K and so on. Since Van Inwagen's restrictions do not necessarily apply to this broader set of actions, the majority of our actions are in fact free. Consequently, the reduction of n choices to n-1 choices still leaves X with many opportunities to exercise free will. O'Connor's criticism however, misses something crucial. The action  $\sim A$  does not have to be restricted to one alternative as O'Conner suggests. Let us suppose that  $\sim A$  is the set of all actions that excludes A as a member. Thus  $\sim A$  could be any number of actions that X performs instead of A. Indeed it is tautological that any action that excludes A is necessarily  $\sim A$ . Therefore, regardless of which  $\sim A_i$ <sup>14</sup> X commits, the action is necessitated by X's not performing A. Consequently, whatever X actually does in place of A is

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 416

<sup>13</sup> O'Conner, Timothy. (2000). *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>14</sup> The subscript i denotes which particular action in the set  $\sim A$  X commits.

irrelevant, regardless of the possibility that there was deliberation in which  $\sim A_i X$  committed.

Van Inwagen's second case, C2 is very similar to the first case and can be defended in a similar fashion. Rather than go through the defence again, I will rephrase C2 to demonstrate how it reflects C. While C questions whether the *action* is indefensible, C2 questions whether any opposing *desire* is indefensible. Suppose X must commit  $\sim A$  because of some overbearing desire D. Therefore, under this compelling desire there is no conflicting desire or at least an insignificant desire  $\sim D$  to commit A. Therefore, committing A is indefensible. Note that A or  $\sim D$  do not necessarily have to be morally indefensible, but simply some indefensible or irrational action or desire.

Now, C3 does require some manoeuvring since these actions occur in the absence of any overwhelming desire or action that one might deem morally indefensible. Furthermore, it appears as though actions under C3 might be initiated by free will. Consider crossing the street. Whatever my motivation is, I am not necessarily concentrating on it and deliberating it for the duration of the walk. Once I have made the decision to go somewhere, it is easy to concede that the completion of the act is, to a large extent, automatic. However, if this act is initiated by a free decision, how do we classify it? It appears as though Van Inwagen's third case may require a further condition to accommodate this distinction. Alternatively, Van Inwagen could argue that the majority of C3 are a direct result of some actions that occur under C and C2. Let's turn now to Van Inwagen's scenarios in which one is supposedly free to act otherwise.

The first was Buridan's Ass cases. How would one go about making a decision under such circumstances? Say I am equidistant between two equally attractive females and both are sending me the exact same positive signal. How do I choose which one to go to? The decision, if any, appears

to be completely arbitrary. If the decision is arbitrary then there is no need for deliberation. Furthermore, if there is a situation such that two interchangeable options are available to the agent, then it appears as though they fall under Van Inwagen's third case of instances that require little or no deliberation. Consider walking into a convenience store and buying a bottle of coke. Usually, the cooler is filled with multiple rows of bottles of coke. This scenario appears to fall under both Van Inwagen's case for an act which is necessitated and one that is free. One could easily concede that the pick of a specific bottle of coke amongst many is arbitrary and automatic, requiring little or no deliberation, and thus determined. On the contrary, one could easily claim that this is an instance of Buridan's Ass and does require a choice. Consequently, there does not appear to be any distinction.

Before we consider Van Inwagen's second and third scenarios where humans are likely to act freely, we must consider another presupposition: how one comes about their moral code of conduct. There are essentially two factors that heavily influence, if not determine, our moral behaviour. The first factor is heredity. We are born with certain genetically determined dispositions that dictate such things as how quickly one loses their temper, whether they are passive, aggressive, and so on. The second factor is social conditioning. One's upbringing, education, nation of birth, era of birth, and so on, will greatly affect how one values certain actions or how one behaves under certain circumstances. Keeping this in mind, we may now proceed with the second and third of Van Inwagen's scenarios of supposed free will.

To reiterate, F2 involve instances of duty vs. inclination. In developing my counter example, I would like to credit John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza in their

collaborative effort, 'When the Will is Free'.<sup>15</sup> In their paper they suggest the possibility of a situation where X is faced with what X believes to be a morally reprehensible act A, but has an overwhelming desire D to perform A. Let us consider this example in depth. First off, how could X both consider an act morally reprehensible, yet at the same time have an overwhelming desire to do it? The answer is found in the previous paragraph when the hereditary element comes into conflict with the social conditioning element. The question is, then: is the action that prevails really a free decision by X?

Let us suppose that X's social conditioning prevails and X commits  $\sim A$ , thus succeeding in suppressing desire D. Does this really count as an instance of free choice? Van Inwagen would have to concede that it does if he is to uphold his thesis. However, it might not be the case. Suppose X's indoctrination was of such a degree that X's refraining from committing A was necessitated. This would certainly create the illusion of a struggle and a choice, but it was in fact not the case. Normally we would like to think that there are few instances of such an intense degree of indoctrination. However, when the indoctrinating element fails to succeed, then presumably it is the desire that prevails and X may have no choice but to fulfill that desire.

It is now easy to see how duty vs. inclination is just the intersection of C and C2. Thus when the desire or inclination prevails we appear to have an instance of C2 and when duty prevails, we seem to have an instance of C. When the sense of duty and inclination are of a similar or equal magnitude, then once again we resort to Buridan's Ass which collapses into an arbitrary decision, C3.

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<sup>15</sup> Fischer, John Martin, and Mark Ravizza. (1992). 'When the Will is Free'. In *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Ethics, ed. J. Tomberlin. Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing.

The most pertinent objection, with which Van Inwagen may respond, is that this line of reasoning is much softer than the cases he initially developed. Indeed there is some truth to this, since there is a conflict, whereas C, C2 and C3 do not necessarily involve conflict. However, when either inclination or duty prevails then precisely at that moment there may no longer be any opposing desires or conditions. This could also be a necessary pre-cursor to instances of C, C2 and C3. After duty or desire prevail, there is no more opposing force and X has no reason to commit A, has no opposing desire to commit A, and thus proceeds to commit  $\sim A$  just as X would in C, C2 and C3.

Lastly, there is F3, when one is deliberating between incommensurable values. This, I will argue, turns out to be nothing more than an elaborative case of the chocolate/vanilla scenario. The chocolate/vanilla case begins with a general desire, such as indulging your sweet tooth. After this initial desire is activated, one is subject to sub desires – say, ice cream vs. cotton candy. Which one prevails is either completely random or which ever sub desire is the stronger of the two. Analogously, when one is faced with incommensurable values, say, working in a bank vs. devoting one's life to philosophical inquiry, it begins with the same sort of general desire, call it the  $\sim B$  desire. Once this desire is in motion, there is apparent deliberation as to which sub-desire will prevail. Consequently, while the intense deliberation gives the false impression of a decision being made, it is ultimately determined by which desire prevails (C2) or, in the case of equally strong desires, randomness (C3).

Let's turn now to a very important presupposition implied by Van Inwagen's restrictivism. If one claims to be an incompatibilist then one has two positions from which to choose. The first option is to maintain the incompatibility thesis and deny the existence of free will altogether, thereby accepting the existence of a deterministic universe. The

second option is to maintain that humans still possess some level of autonomy, and concede that the universe is indeterministic. Consequently, since Van Inwagen's thesis still retains some level of autonomy, albeit very limited, he must commit himself to the existence of an indeterministic universe. There is now one last concern in Van Inwagen's thesis which I now turn my attention to.

Under a deterministic universe, there appears to be nothing wrong with Van Inwagen's first scenario, since all the conditions necessitate only one possible outcome, namely, X committing  $\sim A$ . Indeed this is exactly the point Van Inwagen wants to make against compatibilism. However, since Van Inwagen must accept some form of indeterminism, this becomes problematic. First, if the universe is indeterministic then it is reasonable to assume that there are brute facts<sup>16</sup> in the universe. Therefore, A or  $\sim A$  may occur and there is no way to determine which. Consequently, in a truly indeterministic universe, X commits A and X commits  $\sim A$  are both possible under the exact same conditions. Furthermore, it does not appear possible that the antecedent of C can be modified to include this fact. Suppose we tried to include this in C. For example, say X will commit  $\sim A$  and the universe will not produce the outcome X commits A. Similarly, X commits  $\sim A$  and there is no such thing as brute facts. To uphold these claims we have to disprove the existence of brute facts or concede that the universe must have some level of determinacy. The latter appears to be the only line of defence. However, if an indeterministic universe can accommodate some deterministic properties, then why cannot a deterministic universe accommodate some indeterministic properties? Therefore, Van Inwagen appears unjustified in using a deterministic claim against the compatibilist while applying

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<sup>16</sup> Brute facts are simply the way things are and do not require an explanation or reason.

the same claim to an indeterministic setting to deduce his restrictivist result.

Van Inwagen's restrictivism is a very interesting thesis worthy of much additional investigation and analysis. Indeed, it is likely that some union of determined action and free action is actually the case for the human species. However, given that restrictivism is a relatively new thesis, there are many bugs that need to be worked out if it is to become a convincing school of thought. Unfortunately, given the many shortcomings inherent in both compatibilism and incompatibilism, it does not appear to be likely that this will be happening anytime soon.

# The Message is the Medium

Clara Venice Cameron

**G. F. Schiller's Silent Allegiances and the Appearance of Music, in his; 'Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man.'**

*Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.*

- Confucius

*Music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all,  
But you are the music  
While the music lasts.*

- T. S. Eliot

## I.

For us moderns, the term aesthetic has acquired a very limited realm of meaning. Commonly used interchangeably with the beautiful, aesthetics is in our time most often reserved for references to the art world, or the work of a branch of philosophy which studies the rules governing artistic taste and perception. However, the original definition of aesthetic was much broader; rather than being limited to a specific sphere of activity, it meant to perceive or to feel in general.

Friedrich Schiller, in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*,<sup>1</sup> does not explicitly define precisely which of these two definitions he has in mind. The notion of an 'aesthetic education' does, however, seem to suggest that his conception of the aesthetic, as a subject capable of being

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Essays*, ed. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993).

systematized and taught, tends more towards our modern definition than towards the original.<sup>2</sup> This linguistic modification of the aesthetic away from a description of ‘sensation’ in general, and towards a technique of artistic judgement or taste, might not seem immediately relevant to the argument Schiller puts forward in his *Letters*. Although, as I hope to reveal in the following pages, it is precisely Schiller’s rational interpretation of the aesthetic which will ultimately prevent him from achieving what he sets out to do in the *Letters*: that is, to rescue the senses from the tyranny of reason, thereby harmonizing both sides of man’s inner nature – the sensuous and the rational – in preparation for membership in a future, more just society.

In this paper, I will argue that Schiller’s explicit goal in the *Letters* appears to conceal an implicit contradiction: that is, despite his explicit arguments to the contrary, Schiller increasingly denies the senses of any real tangible power. Instead, Schiller confines the senses to a limited domain assigned by reason. The tension between his explicit and implicit goals, at first barely discernable in the background of the *Letters*, becomes more and more pronounced as Schiller’s argument unfolds. Though he never acknowledges this tension directly, it reveals itself throughout the *Letters* by way of Schiller’s ubiquitous references to music, which I will discuss in the second section of this paper. These musical references, however, are not usually recognized by Schiller; yet terms such as ‘harmony’, ‘attunement’, ‘instruments’, ‘play’, ‘rhythm’, and ‘concert’ have obvious musical resonances. As Schiller invokes these terms to describe the benefits of an aesthetic education, music is implicitly presented as his tacit<sup>3</sup> ally in the harmonization of man’s

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<sup>2</sup> After all, we hardly require external rules to teach us how to sense or to feel.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Tacit’ because, on the surface, Schiller hardly speaks of music at all, choosing instead to focus on sculpture, the ‘most perfect of the arts’ due its potential for objectification.

inner nature. Despite this, he seldom acknowledges music as having a role to play in his program. In the third part of this paper, I will turn to the problem that emerges between Schiller's implicit invocation of music on the one hand, and his explicit rejection of music on the other – a rejection due to what Schiller sees as music's inherent imperfection, its necessary sensuous existence. By analyzing how music is portrayed throughout the *Letters*, I hope to reveal Schiller's implicit goal of suppressing man's sensuous nature in favour of reason, despite his explicit intentions to the contrary. The final section of this paper will focus on how Schiller's insistence on the need to 'overcome nature', in order for man to achieve the harmony required to prepare him for membership in a just society, is not only futile but, more fatally, derails his entire politico-aesthetic project. I shall argue that music is, in fact, a necessary ingredient of the harmony he prescribes; as Schiller himself originally articulates, aesthetic appreciation entails the equal play of both nature and reason. Therefore, Schiller denies his honourable project of integration the opportunity to succeed, by ultimately denying music a significant role in his 'aesthetic education'.

## II.

Schiller, composing his *Letters* shortly after the ultimately unsuccessful French revolution, claims that any modern revolution is doomed to fail for one important reason: man, in his current state, is not yet capable of being free. The hyperbolic rationalism of his current society, Schiller argues, has caused a rupture within man's own nature,<sup>4</sup> alienating him both from his sensuous existence and from society at large. The remedy for this social wound, he suggests, is to turn away from the sphere of politics in order to restore unity to man's inner nature. By

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<sup>4</sup> That is, between man's sensuous nature and his rational one – a rift which Schiller argues is evident in Kant's moral philosophy.

harmonizing his moral and sensuous drives via an ‘aesthetic education’, both sides of man’s nature can learn to ‘play’ together in harmony. This experience of inner harmony, says Schiller, will prepare man for membership in a more harmonious society, and thus is the prerequisite for social progress.

Often described by Schiller in explicitly violent terms, the state is portrayed as a repressive power that forbids man of taking pleasure in his bodily existence. Society is likened to a sort of guillotine that severs man into what Schiller considers his two conflicting natures – the rational and the sensuous - thereby reiterating on the individual level the social division between the universal and particular. Man’s inner rift was exacerbated by the Kantian conception of morality, which portrayed the senses as inherently base and in need of being reignited through rational means. For Kant, only by subordinating the senses to reason can man achieve his destiny, which is to be a rational moral agent. In the *Letters*, Schiller sets out to soften the divide between man’s sensuous and rational drives, in order to free the former from the dominion of the latter so that man can take pleasure in acting morally rather than being coerced into doing so. However, Schiller does not regard this sensuous emancipation as an end in itself; rather, the results of his effort will be two-fold. First, by establishing his inner harmony, man will begin to take pleasure in the moral choices that reason dictates. Note, however, that while the senses in this model cease to resent the call of morality, reason nevertheless remains the only faculty able to prescribe moral laws. Second, once this harmony is established, man is capable of entering into a new society for which he is not yet prepared in his current state. The aesthetic, which ‘alone brings harmony into society, because it fosters harmony in the individual,’<sup>5</sup> is the means by which

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<sup>5</sup> Schiller, p. 177.

this harmonization is accomplished. Through art, man becomes ‘whole’; for, as Schiller explains, to appreciate it ‘both his natures must be in harmony.’<sup>6</sup> What is achieved, therefore, is equilibrium of one’s faculties: reason is brought into attunement with the senses, and neither faculty dominates the other. Once man has entered into what Schiller calls the ‘aesthetic mode’,<sup>7</sup> all his powers can work in reciprocity: his senses are drawn to the work of art with reasoned appreciation, and his reason is brought out of isolation and into the world in order to connect with an object in the realm of experience. Here, then, man can experience beauty as the experience of embodied freedom, where he is neither at the mercy of his senses, nor is he a purely disembodied subject.

Schiller tells us that reasoned appreciation for art is the instrument that harmonizes man’s inner nature. Through his ‘aesthetic education’, man’s reason is no longer at odds with his feelings; instead, they work together in concert. Rather than living with the opposition of man’s two separate drives – the rational and the sensuous – man achieves a ‘higher state,’ which Schiller describes as the ‘play drive’ that destroys this opposition and therefore restores the unity of human nature. Here, one is no longer constrained by either desire or morality; one simply begins to desire morality, and is thus able to take moral pleasure in his senses. Having achieved this state, one is ready to extend one’s personal inner unity to a unity between all men. As Schiller says, ‘all other forms of communication divide society . . . only the aesthetic mode . . . unites society, because it relates to that which is common to all.’<sup>8</sup> This newfound society is more readily achieved by aesthetic

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., and elsewhere throughout the letters.

<sup>7</sup> This is to be differentiated from both the ‘moral mode’ and the ‘natural mode’.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

education than by politics, as the former leads to a state of harmony while simultaneously allowing the free play of all man's faculties, while the latter is only able to achieve unity by 'suppressing variety,' according to Schiller.<sup>9</sup>

By his constant use of 'harmony' to describe the ideal of a just society, his numerous descriptions of the senses of the aesthetic man as being 'in concert', his vision of the ideal state as one in which the 'parts have been tuned up to the idea of the whole', and his description of art as the 'instrument' of culture, we see that Schiller relies heavily on musical analogies throughout the *Letters* to describe both his ideal man as well as his ideal society. Further, his image of a just state, as one in which every individual can realize their full potential rather than merely one of their possibilities, can be likened to the functioning of an orchestra, in which each member plays an individual part in unison with the whole. Though Schiller does not explicitly make this analogy himself, I believe it is an apt one; for an orchestra, like the Greek state which Schiller describes as the ideal community, also has a 'polypoid character', 'in which every individual enjoy[s] an individual existence,' as a violinist or flautist for example, 'yet can grow into the whole organism,' or the orchestra,<sup>10</sup> Further, at any moment, though each member of the orchestra realizes only a particular note, this can then be variously combined with other notes in order to produce a multitude of possibilities. One is thus permitted to both retain his identity and to dissolve into a whole that is greater than its parts. The musicians express themselves individually, yet in doing so further the cause of the whole.

Significantly, the orchestral metaphor resolves an otherwise difficult image that Schiller raises in the third of his *Letters*. Here, Schiller refers to the need for the 'living clockwork' of the state to repair itself while it is still

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 94

<sup>10</sup> Schiller, p. 99.

striking.<sup>11</sup> He seems here to be making a case against abrupt political upheaval, yet at the same time calling for a change in the social regime. But how is it possible to fix a clock while the clock ticks on? Doing so seems to require the suspension of time, yet somehow remaining within time. Schiller offers a possible solution, suggesting that by progressing from the primary (temporal) sensuous drive to the enlightened (eternal) formal drive, time might be annulled, thereby transporting society to an eternal, timeless realm in order to effect this change. However, this solution is problematic. First, because the formal drive, as Schiller describes it, is an individual phenomenon, it is not clear how the collective state can be repaired by a change in the mere individual. Second, Schiller does not explain how we might return from the timeless realm to the temporal realm where the effects of this change are to be felt. The musical metaphor of the orchestra, however, suggests an alternative solution. A symphony, after all, occurs in time; that is, it has a time signature and requires some duration to be played. However, it is simultaneously outside of time in that the passing of symphonic time is malleable, slowing down and accelerating. Thus, the orchestral metaphor permits the suspension of time within time that Schiller's image requires. Further, because of the collective nature of the symphony, it is not necessary for members of a society to undergo individual harmonization all at the same time, as Schiller's solution would presumably require. Rather, in an orchestra, as in society, there will always be stronger and weaker players; if one member falls behind, time does not stop; rather, because the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, it can conceal individual lapses without significant damage to the whole.

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<sup>11</sup>Schiller, p. 92.

### III.

Throughout the *Letters*, although Schiller proclaims to be pleading a case for the equal play between reason and the senses, under his breath he seems to be singing a different tune. Right from the first letter, he begins to *sacrifice* the sensuous realm to the rational in his call for an ‘art of the ideal’, which ‘must abandon actuality’ and take her orders from the ‘necessity inherent in minds, not in the exigencies of matter.’<sup>12</sup> This trend away from the life of the sensuous and towards the hegemony of reason becomes even more explicit as Schiller’s *Letters* progress.

Where he once lamented the ‘modern’ predicament in which the intellect has ‘become a stranger to the world of sense’ and ‘lost sight of matter for the sake of form,’<sup>13</sup> Schiller then sharply rules matter out of the picture, declaring that the true goal of his aesthetic education is to establish a ‘means of leading man from matter to form, from feeling to law, from a limited to an absolute existence.’<sup>14</sup> Reason is no longer in harmony with the senses, but is now enlisted ‘to fight a hard battle with the senses’ in order to progress from the sensuous to the rational. This seems a strange move for Schiller to make, especially after having initially declared that his mission was to revitalize the senses. Even stranger is his description of man as becoming nature’s ‘lawgiver’ who is ‘more than a match’ for her,<sup>15</sup> Where play initially refers to a state of ‘no constraints’, ‘the exclusion of all taste,’<sup>16</sup> it is now referred to as a ‘war against matter.’<sup>17</sup> Art, initially characterized as the unity of matter and reason, is now *reason’s* ‘warrior’, likened to Achilles whom Zeus called upon to fight on his behalf.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Schiller, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> Schiller, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 126

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

These violent references to the aesthetic echo Schiller's description in his fourth letter of the artist as one who commits violence against his material, only to later cover it up in the guise of beauty, in order to make it seem as though matter wanted to be configured in that way. Here already we see Schiller's inherent bias towards reason over the senses, which ought to make us reconsider his entire quest for 'sensory liberation' in a new light. Now, it seems, he only redeems the senses in order to deny them from having any real power in man's quest for progress. The senses are permitted in Schiller's system only insofar as they 'come to rest within stable confines'; in other words, the senses must not deviate from the place which reason dictates. Schiller articulates this point in saying that 'the voice of reason [is man's] true self';<sup>18</sup> ultimately, he continues, art must be 'purified ... of sense'<sup>19</sup> as we move from the aesthetic to the moral sphere. And the moral sphere, as Schiller describes it here, is the realm of 'pure reason'.

As the *Letters* progress, reason reinstalls herself as supreme ruler just as Schiller's sense of the aesthetic progresses from 'art', to 'beauty,' and finally to 'taste'. Taste, of course, implies judgment, and judgment implies reasoning. The senses, for Schiller, do not judge; rather, they are passive: they feel and receive. Reason, on the other hand, is described by Schiller as always being the spectator and never the participant in the aesthetic mode. It must be disinterested, removed from the present, for in order for the world to make sense it must be at a certain distance, both spatial and temporal. Schiller's many references to reason being out of time and eternal attests to the temporal remove reason requires in order to properly view the aesthetic object. The senses, on the other hand, do not require this

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<sup>18</sup> Schiller, p. 160.

<sup>19</sup> Schiller, p. 161.

distance. Even the eyes, which for Schiller are synonymous with ‘the eyes of reason’, are not capable of removing themselves from their object. Perhaps this is why Schiller comes to speak of his ideal art as ‘semblance,’ ‘after-image’ or ‘illusion’; the only way it can be contemplated is as an object that is no longer truly present. For Schiller, the eyes of reason are, unlike those of man, outside of time and reality.

It appears, then, that implicitly, Schiller’s conception of art is in fact far from the setting for a democratic interplay of the faculties. There are rather clear hierarchies that pervade the *Letters* on many fronts. First, among the senses, the eye, which objectifies and therefore ‘drives back importune matter’, is favoured over the ‘animal senses’ of direct contact; accordingly, touch is subverted. Secondly, there is a priority among the arts: sculpture is preferred for its serenity and silence, while music is dismissed as garish. This is not surprising once we examine Schiller’s criteria for ideal art. ‘The artist,’ says Schiller, ‘should turn away from the sorry products of time and ... toward the absolute.’<sup>20</sup> Art, for Schiller, is semblance – not to be confused with reality – and ‘must be silently projected into the infinity of time.’<sup>21</sup> Art is either imprinted on ‘silent stone’ in tranquility, or put into a ‘sober mould of words.’<sup>22</sup> Schiller’s ideal art, furthermore, does not impose itself externally on the senses; instead, reason can choose when to look upon it and for how long, and it is easily objectified, thus capable of measured contemplation from a reasonable distance. Art, in other words, is static and eternal – quite the opposite of music, which is dynamic, and in time. In fact, Schiller explicitly excludes music from the aesthetic mode, for it is

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<sup>20</sup> Schiller, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

said to have ‘an even greater affinity with the senses than true aesthetic freedom really allows.’<sup>23</sup>

But this dismissal is quite ironic. For, up to this point, Schiller relies almost exclusively on musical metaphors in describing the benefits of an aesthetic education! If he turns explicitly against music – and indeed it seems he must, given his requirements for the ideal art – it is because music is, of all the arts he discusses, the most representative of an art that illustrates the interplay of reason and the senses; and while Schiller allegedly sets out to prove this, we have seen that in fact he wants to do no such thing. After all, music is far from eternal, but rather fleeting and temporal; it is dynamic, consisting of changes in volume, register and pitch; it is often capricious or spontaneous, which Schiller derides as animalistic and inhuman; it is often ‘full of feeling’, which Schiller refers to as a sign of barbarism; it is difficult to control, as one cannot choose to ‘not hear’ by closing his ears the way he can choose to ‘not see’ by closing his eyes;<sup>24</sup> and it is difficult to objectify or view as separate from one’s self, as music seems to enter into the listener, becoming part of her embodiment, resonating inside her, and thereby turning her into a participant rather than the passive observer that Schiller prefers.<sup>25</sup>

It is no wonder, then, that Schiller wishes to deny music a place in his system, for the simple reason that music

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150

<sup>24</sup> That is, once the music begins you must submit to it.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Orchestra time’ is an interesting phenomenon in its own right. Music is, by its very nature, in time; however, it is not ‘in time’ in a usual way, it is not measurable by a clock. Rather, the musicians make their own time, which they can speed up and slow down as they wish. The audience is therefore ‘left out of time’, not into an unchanging eternity, but, rather, into a dynamic, shared experience of ‘timeful timelessness’. Time does not stop, yet it becomes irregular; it is only regular in that it permits irregularities. It is, in other words, both rational and irrational, both law and lawless, both matter and form; it forces the audience to be both spectator and participant, without being reducible to either one.

threatens the ultimate goal of his aesthetic education: to establish a ‘pure rational concept of beauty’ by which we can be led ‘out of the familiar circle of phenomenal existence, away from the living presence of things, and tarry in the land of abstractions.’<sup>26</sup> Music does not conform to the rules for aesthetic experience that Schiller sets out, for one simple reason: music, though harmonious, defies reason. No matter how many facts we amass to explain its frequencies and vibrations, we do not know where it comes from or where it goes. It is both personal and social, both dissolves us and claims us, is both dark and light, both chaos and order, both matter and form, both subjective and objective. Schiller, in fact, might agree with this claim, for he defines music as the ‘immediacy of . . . sensuous presence’ which ‘grips us powerfully’ . . . but has no ‘serene clarity.’<sup>27</sup> As Schiller explains, while we leave a piece of music feeling excited, ‘it does not allow us to abstract thought.’<sup>28</sup> While music appeals to reason, therefore, reason cannot get a grip on it; for no sooner does one establish a comfortable distance than the object slips away, never to be heard from again.

#### IV.

Schiller’s text shows a dramatic inconsistency between his apparent desire to resuscitate the senses from the tyranny of an overly mechanized reason that impedes the development of each man’s potential, and his implicit aim to reaffirm the ‘inevitable progression . . . of [man’s] destiny’<sup>29</sup> by using aesthetic judgment to emancipate himself from the dominion of reason, thereby acquiring mastery over it instead. Through these tacit allegiances, Schiller robs of his inquiry the very possibility of allowing the senses to emerge

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<sup>26</sup> Schiller, p. 115.

<sup>27</sup> Schiller, p. 150.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Schiller, p. 162

as more than a mere secondary phenomenon, one that requires to be controlled by the ‘higher’ faculty of reason.

However, as I have argued, because of music’s defiance to reason, it is, of all the arts, most able to accomplish the original mission Schiller first sets up for himself at the outset of the *Letters*, namely, to harmonize both sides of man’s nature, preparing him for membership in a more just society. Because it literally resonates in our bodies and figuratively in our minds, music is perhaps the most ‘aesthetic’ of all the arts, once we take as our definition of the aesthetic, not the ‘critique of taste’ which Schiller prefers, but, rather, the original meaning, sensing and perceiving. Music does not just affect the ear, in the way painting affects the eye; it is experienced not only aurally but also somatically. Music places us, it situates us, both in our bodies and outside of our ‘selves’ in the collective, be it symphony or audience. It connects all who experience it by entering into everyone equally yet is experienced by everyone differently, in relation to the way in which his own body is affected. Thus, music individualizes us as it unites us, allowing us an embodied experience of being at once both individual and genus.

Ultimately, for Schiller, beauty and art are never permitted to be truly free. Instead, beauty is subject to the demands of reason, of perfection, and of idealization; in short, art is subject to taste, and it is precisely this rational principle that seems to be what Schiller intends when he speaks of an ‘aesthetic education’. However, Schiller does not seem to allow space within his education for that part of our aesthetic experience which is not available to reason. Schiller is right to argue that art is capable of arousing conditions in man such as would allow him to create and sustain a society in which individuals treat each other with respect, and in which each has the opportunity to unfold his own potentials in such a way as to benefit all of humanity without impinging on the freedom of another. However, it

seems to me that an ‘aesthetic education’ requires a broader interpretation than rational, detached speculation. For, in our experience of a musical performance, there is always a mysterious element that cannot be explained, but only felt. Thus, Schiller is correct to acknowledge music’s strong ties to nature and the senses; however, this mystery, responsible for music’s partial concealment from the prying eyes of reason, is far from being a defect. Rather, this irrationality should be seen as vital to human existence. If, through aesthetic education, we can begin to appreciate nature and the senses without attempting to explain or objectify them, we might accomplish the task that Schiller originally set up: to allow the senses a more significant role in human experience. As music cannot be objectified by the eye – the distancing sense par excellence – it reminds us that what is ‘real’ is not always rational.<sup>30</sup>

In order to succeed, an ‘aesthetic education’ must place music on par with all other art forms; for music reminds us of that part of existence which cannot be explained, yet is always recognized. By appreciating the limits of reason, man can approach art with a more original

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<sup>30</sup> At this point, one might wonder why music’s resistance to objectification might be relevant to – or indeed, even desirable for – one’s aesthetic education. Keeping in mind that the goal of such an education is to pave the way for a better society, my reply would be that, first, the direct line of communication between the musician and the audience establishes a relationship of trust. The generous gift of the musical experience cannot be possessed (because it cannot be objectified) and therefore belongs to each man equally (and is thus a more democratic art than sculpture, which can be reserved for only one individual and withheld from the rest). Secondly, the experience of a type of matter that cannot be objectified, and thus cannot be overcome by reason, reminds man of constituting a part of nature that is not in opposition to it. This realization would benefit a future society by allowing man to acknowledge both sides of his nature, and by providing him with a heightened ecological awareness and respect for the planet he inhabits.

'aesthetic' sense – one which allows him pleasure in sensation itself. Schiller's ultimate expulsion of the senses from the 'kingdom of taste,'<sup>31</sup> his vision of an ideal society, betrays the very goal he sets out to achieve; instead, the *Letters* only end up deepening the rift between man's moral and sensuous drives. Allowing music a greater place in an 'aesthetic education' is, therefore, necessary to rescue Schiller's aesthetic project from his violation of its own principles. If indeed, as Schiller writes, '[it] is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom,'<sup>32</sup> we must remind him that beauty is not merely something to be seen – it demands also to be heard.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 90.



## Contributors:

**David Smith** is now in his final year specializing in Philosophy and Christianity and Culture at St. Michael's College. When not interrogating entities in an insistent search with the aim of clarifying the mystery, he enjoys investigating contemporary debates in the philosophy of religion. He is indebted to Dr. Michael Vlad Niculescu for the assignment that planted the seeds of his paper and to the editorial staff at Noesis for the many months of violence done to his text.

Having recently completed his Honours BA in philosophy, **David Owen Morgan** hopes the essay published here and a bit of good luck will be enough to get him into a decent graduate program. He has started work on a novel, but admits that finishing it is not a current goal. He encourages UofT philosophy students to punctuate their degrees by taking a few of the rigourously existential classes offered through the Department of Literary Studies.

**Alastair Cheng** has just taken an extremely long time to finish his B.A. in history & philosophy. Although he normally blames this on working as an editor at the Literary Review of Canada, it's mostly because he's a very, very slow writer. If Alastair's got Kripke all wrong, write [alastair.cheng@gmail.com](mailto:alastair.cheng@gmail.com) and set him straight.

**Megan Blomfield** is an exchange student from the University of Bristol and has returned to England to finish her undergraduate studies. When she isn't studying philosophy she spends her time immersing herself as fully as possible in the pursuits of the vulgar so as to avoid the mental turmoil that can result from agonising too much over deep philosophical questions.

**Adam De Luca** graduated from the University of Toronto with a Specialist in Philosophy. His philosophical interest is with Ancient and Medieval thinkers. He is will be attending Osgoode Hall Law School in the Fall.

During the 2007/2008 school year, **Peter Dobozy** will be attending the University of Alberta, where he is to start working on his Masters degree in Philosophy. After making some minor speck of a speck within the branch of Metaphysics even more confusing and incomprehensible, he plans to totally sell out and join the corporate world.

**Clara Venice Cameron** graduated from Victoria College, University of Toronto, with a specialist degree in philosophy in 2007, earning the Sanford Gold Medal. In 2006 and 2007, she received a Millennium Scholarship for innovation in music and philosophy. She is especially interested in the somatic, ethical and political aspects of aesthetic experience, with a focus on the intersection of philosophy, music and architecture. While in school, Clara has been an active musician both on stage and in the studio, and looks forward to the upcoming release of two new albums with her bands, Girl Delux and the Department of Motion. Her goal is to take philosophy off the page and onto the stage, in search of what music can do that words can not.

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νόησις

Those who are lovers of  
wisdom must be inquirers  
into many things indeed

- Heraclitus

χρὴ εὖ μάλα πολλῶν  
ἴστορας φιλοσόφους  
ἄνδρας εἶναι καζ'

‘Ηράκλειτον